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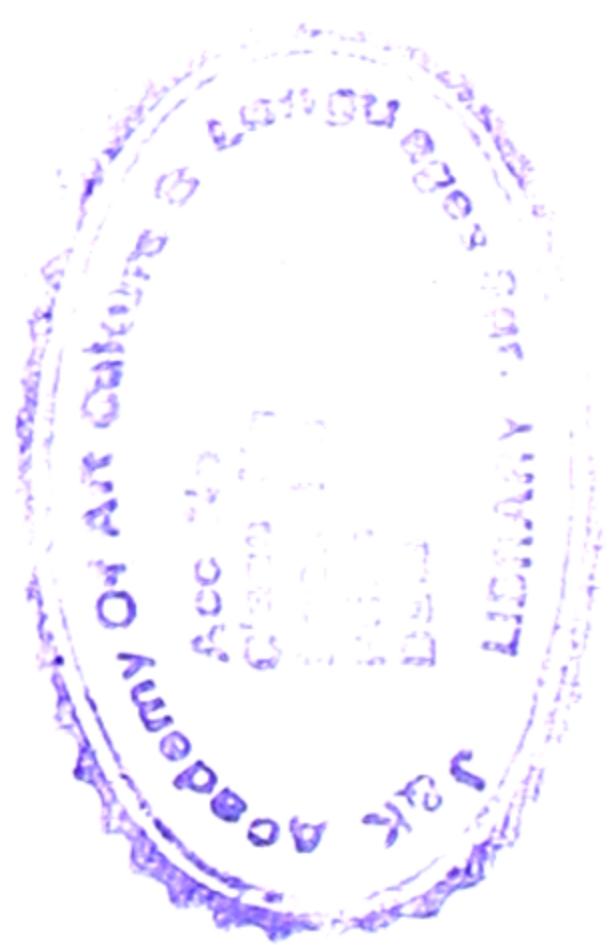
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# ART, CULTURE AND LANGUAGES



ART, CULTURE AND LANGUAGES

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# A SHORT HISTORY OF ENGLISH LITERATURE

INCLUDING A SKETCH OF  
AMERICAN LITERATURE

BY

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E. A. ANDREWS. M. A.

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B. G. TEUBNER LEIPZIG 1910

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## PREFACE

This short account of English literature is intended for the use of young students of English in schools and seminaries.

Biographical details have been dwelt on chiefly to account for the direction in which the author developed. Except in the case of our greatest writers only a limited number of works are mentioned. Some favourites of a former generation have here been treated of shortly. In each case this has been done in accordance with the newer criticism as seen in such works as Gosse, *Short History of English Literature*. And prominent German authorities have been kind enough to express their approval of the recent point of view.

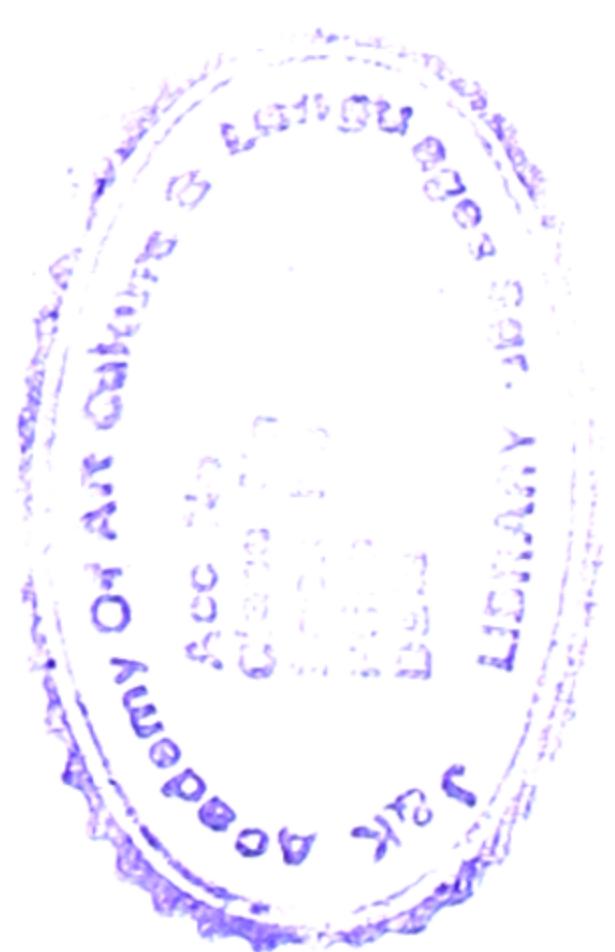
Of German works that have been consulted the histories of Hettner, Ten Brink, Wölker, and studies by Brandl and Leon Kellner are the chief. In England the following writers, by their books or their lectures have influenced the author of this little book: Professors Skeat, Hales, Canon Ainger, Stopford Brooke, David Masson, Andrew Lang, William Archer. And the histories by Ed. Gosse, A. J. Wyatt (Tutorial Series) and Hugh Walker (The Age of Tennyson) have given much help in the treatment of modern literature.

The author is deeply indebted for kindly interest and criticism by many whose experience makes their advice of value; to the Professor to whom this little work is dedicated; to Mr. Dantzler, Lektor in English at the University of Leipzig; and to Herr Grundmann, Senior of the English Seminar, Leipzig for undertaking the List of Words and aiding in the making of the Index.

Leipzig, May 21, 1910.

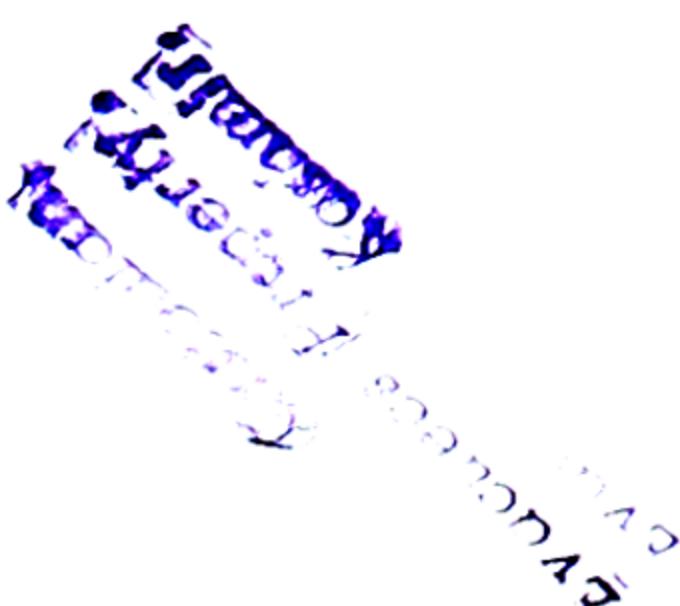
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# PERIOD I

## OLD ENGLISH LITERATURE

### (BEFORE THE NORMAN CONQUEST)

Beowulf . Cædmon . Bæda . Cynewulf . King Aelfred . From Aelfred to the Norman Conquest . Aelfric . Note on Language

### INTRODUCTION

In the remote past before ever the Saxon sea-rover swooped down on the shores of Britain, the little isle had long been inhabited by Gaels and Celts successively. With the invasion of Britain by Julius Cæsar (B.C. 55) began the Roman rule which held sway for more than four centuries and a half and which made of the Celts a subjected race. Of the Roman colonies that were then founded, the towns that were fortified, and the roads that were made we find traces in our common speech of to-day. So also do some household words point back to a Celtic origin. But neither to Celt nor Roman do we turn for the beginnings of our language and literature.

On the withdrawal of the Roman legions in 410 A.D. the Britons found themselves unable to repel the invasions of the Picts and Scots from the north. For a century past the lusty Saxon sea-rover had made raids on the eastern shores of Britain, and to such did the men of Kent turn for aid against the fierce northern foe. The strangers came readily — as the lion to the lamb! — Tradition assigns the date 449 A.D. for the landing of a tribe of Jutes under Hengist and Horsa who in a few years had taken possession of Kent. For the next century and a half by successive invasions of Saxons in the south, and Angles in the east and north, Britain was gradually wrested from the Celt, and became known as the land of the Angles, Angla-land, or England. The defeated race who took refuge in Cumbria, Wales and Cornwall reappear no more as a nation in history. But the Celtic traditions proved in after ages to be a treasure-hoard of poetic fancy for singers in England and France.

## THE BEGINNINGS OF ENGLISH LITERATURE

As the little streams trickling down a hillside may be the sources of a mighty river, so the songs of the English before they came to England are the beginnings of the great stream of English Literature. Of such songs the gleeman, the welcome visitor at every feast had a store, and some of these verses were later committed to writing. Among the earliest we may mention: The Song of Widsith (the Traveller who travelled or fared wide) which relates the singer's many wanderings; it is said to date from the fifth century: Deor's Complaint, the lament of a bard who has been out-witted and robbed by his enemy, and hence feels the bitterness of adversity: The Fight at Finnesburg, or the story of Finn whose home in Friesland had been attacked. The spirited description given is very characteristic of the heathen war songs of the old English. The poem and the story of Waldhere is alluded to in the great song of Beowulf. Fragments of early alliterative verse also contain Charms of very early heathen days. The farmer used these to bring a blessing on his land or to remove a curse. Or when bees were to be swarmed he recited such words as these: — “Sit ye, Victory Women, sink ye to the earth!” And over the sick man the healer would chant an old formula to avert the blows of the dreaded powers of evil. But of more interest for us is:

### The Story of Beowulf.

This, the greatest of Old English poems and the earliest epic of the Germanic race, originated among the English in their German home, probably in the end of the sixth century. The poem is in two parts. The scene of the first is laid in Zealand, of the second part in Sweden, the home of the hero. We hear of the honourable descent of Hrothgar the ruling chief who has built for himself Heorot the stately hall not far from the devouring sea, nor from the marsh and moorland where lurks the dreaded foe. Such a one was the monster Grendel, “Half human, half fiend” who, envying the dwellers of Heorot their mirth and revelry, makes frequent attacks by night, and has carried off at one time thirty of the thanes of Hrothgar. This lasts twelve years. Then Beowulf, thane of Hygelac King of the Goths, comes to the rescue with fourteen fellow warriors. Hrothgar gives him cordial welcome, which is followed later by gratitude and gifts, after Beowulf has wrestled with, and defeated Grendel. The fiend loses an arm and flees to its den only to die of the

wound. The next night Grendel's mother attacks, and kills in Beowulf's absence a valued friend and adviser of Hrothgar's. To avenge this Hrothgar and Beowulf repair together to the monster's watery lair. Beowulf advances alone, kills Grendel's mother and brings back Grendel's head in triumph to Hrothgar. He meets with a profusion of thanks and rewards; the two friends part, and Beowulf returns home to tell of his adventure to Hygelac. Thus ends Part I. In Part II we find that Beowulf had been reigning for fifty years in Sweden after the death of Hygelac and his son. His heart is still young, and his courage unabated. On hearing that a fire-breathing dragon is keeping guard over a treasure hoard and is about to ravage the country Beowulf chooses twelve men and sets forth to fight it. His followers prove cowardly and forsake him, all but his kinsman Wiglaf who helps him slay the "deadly worm". But its burning breath and fierce blows have fatally wounded the aged hero. He feels death approaching, and gives orders to have the treasure brought that his eyes may feast on it before they close for ever. And with words of farewell full of beauty and dignity he dies. Wiglaf mourns his dear lord, whose burial befits his rank. His bones are burned on a lofty pyre and are then consigned with precious treasures to a mound on the heights of Hronesnaes. And with this the poem ends.

The character of Beowulf is that of the ideal Germanic hero of the time when the poem took shape. It is, together with the manners and customs described, of an historical nature. We have a picture of our forefathers and the life they lead, of their ways in peace and war, of the hall of the chieftain standing in sight of the stormy sea with its ships coming into harbour, and the marsh and moorland where lurk the beasts of prey. We see hunting and feasting, and the singer reciting the brave deeds of old to the listening warriors. Above all we understand what is expected of the ideal king in his relations to those who serve him, of the gracious queen who must add her words of praise of a hero's achievement. We learn about court ceremonial, and the order of burial when a great man dies. And lastly we feel that these our fathers were real men and women who loved and hated, fought valiantly and rewarded liberally, and then as bravely laid down their arms to die when Fate or Wyrd, the inevitable one, came to claim them.

#### THE ORIGIN AND MEANING OF THE POEM

has led to much conjecture. We may assume that many songs and lays of older England were sung, first, of a mythical Beowa, then of a historical Beowulf, the dragon slayer, a hero of the sixth century. The Angles brought

this story to the sea-bound coast of Northumbria. In the eighth century a singer put the songs together, and in the tenth century a scribe wrote out the manuscript we possess in which Christian elements have been added to the old pagan epic. In this form the poem contains over 3000 lines of alliterative verse.

### BEOWULF'S LAST WORDS

Beowulf spoke:

The old man in sorrow the gold he viewed.  
 "I for these treasures to the Lord of all thanks,  
 To the glorious King, in words do speak,  
 To the Lord eternal, — which I here look upon,  
 For this that I might for mine own people  
 Before my death-day such treasures obtain.  
 Now I for the hoard of jewels have paid  
 Mine own aged life; do ye now supply  
 The needs of my people: I may not longer be here.  
 Bid ye the war-famed a mound to make  
 Bright after the pyre at the sea's point,  
 Which shall for remembrance to mine own people  
 Raise itself high on the Whale's ness,  
 That it the sea-farers hereafter may call  
 Beowulf's mound, who shall their high ships  
 O'er the sea mists from afar drive."  
 He put from his neck the golden ring,  
 The bold-minded prince, gave to the thane,  
 The young spear-warrior, his gold-adorned helm,  
 Collar and burnie, bade him use them well:  
 "Thou art the last left of our own kindred  
 Of the Waegmundings. Weird carried away all  
 Of mine own kinsmen at the time appointed,  
 Earls in their strength: I shall go after them."

*Translated by James M. Garnett, M. A.*

### THE FIRST CHRISTIAN POEMS IN ENGLISH

According to tradition Christianity came to Britain at a very early date. But the first great effort of conversion that was eminently successful was the work of the Irish monks in Northumbria (sixth century). Christian settlements were founded, and learning was encouraged. This was independent of the Roman Church. When, at the bidding of Pope Gregory Augustine landed in Kent (597) the foundation was laid of the Roman ecclesiastical rule in England. In the next century it had spread to Northumbria and its supremacy was formally established at the Synod of Whitby (664). The Celtic missionaries withdrew, but their faithful labours had called forth a simple-hearted religious fervour in

which atmosphere our first English Christian poem came to life, and an unlearned farm-servant

### Cædmon

was the singer. Hilda, Abbess of the religious community at Whitby, had called on him in vain to sing to the harp like his comrades. But he could nought of the art of poesy and was silent. Then a Heavenly Being came at night in a vision to Cædmon and brought him the gift of song "to sing the beginning of all things". And when he awoke he recalled the song of his dream which begins thus:

"Now let us praise the guardian of the heavenly kingdom,  
The power of the Creator and the counsel of his mind,  
The works of the Father of glory, how the Eternal Lord  
Originated every marvel."

*Trans. Miller.*

The venerable Bede who tells us this story, adds that Cædmon became a monk and turned all he learned "into the sweetest of songs", which began with the Creation and, touching on the life and passion of Christ, ended in foreshadowing judgment and eternal bliss or woe. What has been known as Cædmon's Paraphrase is now proved to be in part, at least, of other authorship. It is noteworthy that early English Christian poetry points to the Celtic teaching of a personal relation between man and his Maker. Its "subjectivity is a new feature in English literature" as contrasted with the pagan epic. But occasionally in the telling of Bible stories or spiritual conflicts it is epic, almost dramatic, in its style.

### The Venerable Bede or Bæda (672 – 735).

On account of his great learning and its influence on his time Bede cannot be omitted from English literature, although his original works were in Latin. The most noted is his Ecclesiastical History, an account of the early English Church. It is valued for its accuracy as well as its literary charm of style. He is said to have translated the Gospel of St. John into English, dictating the last words on his death-bed to one of his followers. "It is finished now, dear Master," said the scribe. "Thou sayest truth, all is finished now," and praising God with his last breath died Bede the Venerable, as gentle as he was learned.

### The Greatest Poet before the Norman Conquest: Cynewulf.

The first place among the poets before the Norman Conquest is given to Cynewulf who lived in the eighth century. He is said to have been in his youth a wandering gleeman or a scop who sang lyrics of great beauty. But the poems on which his fame rests are of a deeply reli-

gious nature and probably belong to his mature age. Four of the following are his. The two last are usually ascribed to him. Christ; dealing with the life of Christ on earth and His second Advent. The Fates of the Apostles; a title which explains the contents. Julianæ; the story of an early Christian martyr. Elena; which is considered to be Cynewulf's masterpiece. It tells the story of the finding of the true Cross by Helena, mother of the Emperor Constantine. The Dream of the Rood (= Cross) "betrays the spirit of tender yet passionate veneration for the Cross". The Phœnix is remarkable for a wealth of colour and striving after artistic effect in painting the ideal country. Cynewulf's work is a distinct advance on that of Cædmon.

### Old English Prose: King Aelfred the Great (871 – 901).

We now come to troublous times; the days of the Danish Invasions. In the end of the eighth century these fierce kinsfolk of the Angles began to ravage the east coast of England. Their repeated invasions laid the north waste; monasteries and places of learning were rased to the ground and in the course of a hundred years the land became desolate. Then Aelfred, ruler of Wessex, who was for a time among the defeated, succeeded in vanquishing his grim foe, and peace was restored. But all education, learning and literature had been at a complete standstill. As soon as Aelfred was again in power he devoted himself to raising up his people by making good laws, by establishing schools, by inviting scholars, English, Welsh and French, to his court, and by writing books himself. He wrote a literary English prose. Finding that Latin was forgotten, he translated works of great Latin authors: The Pastoral Care of Gregory; The Universal History of Orosius; The History of Bæda; Boethius' Consolations of Philosophy. And he inspired others to write. The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle which had begun in a desultory way now took a new start and was the first attempt at English History. English prose became a medium of thought and took a higher rank as a language. Aelfred frequently added words of his own to his translations, and in his Boethius he writes: "I have wished to live worthily while I lived, and to leave to those who should come after me my memory in great deeds".

### From King Aelfred to the Norman Conquest.

In the middle of the tenth century there took place a monastic revival with which we connect the names of the Blickling Homilies or sermons. The scholar Aelfric (about 955) has been called the Bæda of his time. He was not

only of great learning and piety, which is seen by his Homilies, but also encouraged learning. He wrote a Grammar and translated Latin books into English for popular use, and, above all he translated the Bible into English. But the days of Old English literature were drawing to a close. The Danes again contested the right of rule with the English and were more successful. Literature did not flourish under the Danish kings. It might have revived under Edward the Confessor (1042) had that weak king not filled his court and the chief offices with Norman Frenchmen. Owing to such a large foreign element the language underwent changes that were hastened by the Norman invasion. Therefore the French influence on English did not begin after the Battle of Hastings, but with the coming of Edward's Norman favourites. It was on a rash promise given by Edward that the Norman Duke, William, based his claim to the English throne. And when, after the victory of Hastings, (Oct. 14. 1066) he took possession of England, by might rather than by right, his rule brought about changes that made French the language of legislation. And this tongue was also the medium of intercourse between himself and his subjects, whether Normans or Englishmen.

#### NOTE ON LANGUAGE

The tongue of the Celts has in no way influenced the English language as it is now spoken. A few words in domestic use, e. g. *hog* (= *swine*), or descriptive of natural features, such as *down* (= *hill*), come to us from these early Britons. Remains of the Roman occupation of Britain are seen in names such as *Lincoln*, (*colonia*); and *Chester*, *Winchester*, *Cirencester* (*castra* = *camp*). Our *street* is the paved way, *strata via* of the Romans. The Church Latin that was brought by Augustine and his clergy is evident in many ecclesiastical terms of to-day e. g. *minister*, *ministration*, *nave*, *mass*, *clerk*. The Old English peoples spoke a fully inflected language which should be pronounced, when read, as is modern German. The noun, adjective, pronoun and article were declined, the first having five cases. The verb had "an" in the infinitive and many changes of form that have long since ceased to exist. The term *Anglo-Saxon* was bestowed on this speech by the learned, and is still used for the Old English written and spoken before the Norman Conquest. The speech of the Danes is to be traced in such common words as: *they*, *egg*, *sky*, *guest*.

Old English Poetry was *alliterative* and *unrhymed*. Two short lines were combined by alliteration into one long line. Two accents in every short line had to fall on long syllables. The accent of the verse had to be the same as the accent of the spoken sentence. In this metre was the Story of Beowulf recited.

By the Norman Conquest the old *book-language* of the English was destroyed, and then arose the English dialects from which Middle English was formed.

## PERIOD II

### MIDDLE ENGLISH LITERATURE

(FROM THE NORMAN CONQUEST TO THE RENAISSANCE)

The Norman Rule · The Chronicles · Four Cycles of Romance · Chaucer and his Contemporaries · The Northern Poets · Early Ballads · Dawn of the Drama · Malory · Caxton

#### THE NORMAN RULE

With the coming of the Normans the French or Romance tongue became the language of the courts of justice and of the upper classes, whether Norman or English. And this lasted for two hundred years. William the Conqueror, notwithstanding his ability to rule, was unable to master the English speech. To his credit be it said that he invited learned foreigners to England and placed them in prominent positions in the Church. The medium for education and learning would therefore be the Latin or the French language. By the middle of the twelfth century the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, the chief evidence of English learning and literature, had come to an end. The Chronicler (see Robert of Gloucester) complains with bitterness that unless a man could speak French he was little thought of, but the "low man", the subordinate class, held fast to their own native English.

The Norman Conquest was not without its benefits for the people and language of England. The Norman knight, by his valour, brought an atmosphere of chivalry and poetry with him. And he was as bravely met by Saxon heroes whose deeds gave rise to song and legend which the wandering minstrels spread through the land. A great favourite was the story of Havelock the Dane, and of Hereward the Wake, the sturdy Saxon who, with his band of followers, resisted the encroachments of the Normans. And the legend of Childe, (Knight) Horn has, in a later age, been deemed worthy of use by the German poet, Rückert.

### The Gradual Fusion of the Two Races.

In the course of time the Kings of England lost their possessions in France. The baron who would not serve two masters having to choose, often made England his home. Friction grew less when the inefficiency of later sovereigns called forth a spirit of rebellion, a common cause where English and Normans fought under one banner. And the Scandinavian blood of the Normans was, after all, a link with the descendants of Angles and Danes. It was a slow process, but gradually the Normans and their French tongue were absorbed by the English and their language, a fusion which it took two centuries to bring about, but one which was a mutual benefit.

**The Reawakening of English.** When English Literature came to life again, it was to take two different directions; 1. that of religious, 2. secular literature as seen in Chronicles, or the telling of stories and romances. Under 1, we have the *Ormulum* (written about 1215) so called after the author *Orm*, who put into English verse, using scarcely any French words, the lessons chosen by the Church for the year, with explanations. The *Ancren Riwle* written in prose about five years later (1220) is a set of rules with much wise advice for nuns or anchoresses. Early in the next century (1300) we find legends of saints, e. g. *Joseph of Arimathie*, and martyrs, as, *Thomas à Becket* († 1170); also manuals, paraphrases of the Bible and sermons in both prose and poetry. This points to the influence of the Friars who came to work in the English towns. In order to give the people a religious poem that might draw off their attention somewhat from worldly romances the *Cursor Mundi* was written about 1320 in English. It deals with a vast subject; the work and designs of God from the beginning to the end of all things.

The rise of secular literature is seen in

### The Chronicle or Historical Story.

Such story telling began with 1. *Layamon's Brut* or *Chronicle of Britain* (1205?). It was based on the Latin *Chronicle of Geoffrey of Monmouth* (1147) which was rewritten in French by *Wace the Norman*, and finally put into English verse by *Layamon*, a priest of *Worcestershire*. He also made use of other sources, adding and expanding liberally. The verse is the alliterative line with some use of assonance. The story goes back to *Brut* or *Brutus*, the legendary founder of Britain. Much space is given to the legends of *King Arthur*, the ideal knight

and hero. — The style is forcible, and the language used *is that of the people. It ranks as the first of the long line of stories told with poetic feeling that came to be a great feature of that age.*

2. The Chronicle of Robert of Gloucester, *the first written in rhyme*, dates from the end of the thirteenth century. The most authentic statements are the accounts of the Norman Conquest which speak of the down-trodden English.

Much ath<sup>1</sup> the sorwe ybe<sup>2</sup> oft in Engelonde,  
As ye mowe<sup>3</sup> here and er: yhure<sup>4</sup> and understande,  
Thus, lo! the Englisc volk: vor nougnt to ground come  
For a fals king, that nadde<sup>5</sup> non right to the kingdom.  
And the Normans ne couthe<sup>6</sup> speke tho bote her owe speche,  
And speke Frensch as hei dude atom<sup>7</sup> and her children dude also teche.  
Vor bote<sup>8</sup> a man conne Frenss me<sup>9</sup> telth of him lute<sup>10</sup>:  
Ac<sup>11</sup> lowe men holdeth to Engliss and to her owe speche yute.<sup>12</sup>

3. Robert Manning of Brunne (1338) also wrote a Chronicle in verse, and tells the story of Gregory, later Pope, finding English slaves in Rome. On asking who they were, and being told, "Angles!" he replied, "not Angles, but angels!" (non Angli sed angeli) and sent missionaries under Augustine to convert the English to Christianity.

But the interest now awakened in the history of the country began to extend beyond the shores of the island. The Crusades were not without their influence, and tales of heroes beyond the seas mingled with those of Britain. Then arose the fashion of telling stories in groups or cycles. The centre of each cycle was a hero whose great deeds had been added to in each country where the minstrels had sung his fame.

Four Cycles of Romance now became popular in England:

1. The story of King Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table.  
2. The story of Charlemagne and his Twelve Peers, much of which was pure fiction. The Song of Roland, Charlemagne's nephew, had been sung at the Battle of Hastings to inspire the Norman soldiers with courage.

3. The Life of Alexander the Great. This had been brought from the East and became widely known.

4. The Siege of Troy, made use of by Chaucer, but from French originals. For the history of English literature the first of these is the most important.

---

1 hath. 2 been. 3 may. 4 heard. 5 had not. 6 could not. 7 did at home. 8 unless. 9 men, one. 10 little. 11 but. 12 well, good.

### The Story of Arthur.

Arthur, a king's son, was brought up in seclusion by order of Merlin, the wizard, who saw into the future and held sway over the fates of men. The youth grew in beauty and strength, and he alone among men was able to wrest from the stone that held it fast the sword of wrought steel, Excalibur. And this he carried till his dying day. Then Arthur wedded royal Guenever whose father gave to him the Round Table at which a hundred and fifty knights could sit, equal in degree but each vying with the other to be first in deeds of prowess. Foremost among them was Lancelot of Joyous Gard — a goodly castle — a brave man but cherishing sin in his heart. Yet because of unrequited love for him died Elaine, Fair Maid of Astolat. And her body was borne on a barge down the river, the cold hands clasping a letter to Lancelot. At sight of which Queen Guenever did weep. Great also among the knights was Tristram of Lyones who was sent from Ireland to demand tribute from his uncle Mark, King of Cornwall. There he came to know and love Isoud La Belle, but on going over the seas to Little Britain (Brittany) he wedded Isoud la Blanche Mains, at which the other did grieve. But for his valour many a strange knight sought to have the honour of crossing swords with Tristram. King Arthur had ever the greatest name, and was loved of all his knights who thronged to his court at Camelot. His sister, Morgan le Fay, was contrariwise feared for her witchcraft and the evil wrought by her cunning wiles. And Arthur, advancing in years and fame, had yet a heart sore with a secret sorrow. Being one day mortally wounded in combat, and feeling death near, he ordered his beloved Excalibur to be cast into the waters, from which a hand reached up and drew the sword out of sight. Then a barge came slowly near where sat three queens weeping for very grief, and they bore Arthur away to the isle of Avilion. But men believe he will come again when his people have need of him. Queen Guenever, who lacked in duty to her lord in his life-time, for sorrow at his going fled to a nunnery.

Of this nature are the earlier legends of Arthur. From Britain they were taken to France and sung by Chrestien de Troie and others. And a later series arose with a strong religious element. The valour of the knights who were to defend the helpless and fight for right was now chiefly directed towards finding the Holy Graal. This was the chalice used by the Saviour at the Last Supper and later held by Joseph of Arimathea to receive the blood at the crucifixion. It then became in-

visible to mortal eyes, but could be seen by the knight of perfect purity of heart; and such a one was Sir Galahaad. He was the last to behold it.

The *Morte d'Arthur*, (see Malory) that valued collection, does not include all legends of Arthur known. The alliterative poetry of the north has preserved the story of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight. The latter, whose head was cut off by Gawain walks away carrying it in his hand, and challenges Gawain to meet him at the New Year. Gawain goes in golden armour, passes through many tests of goodness, meets his knight at the Green Chapel, survives the combat by virtue of a magic girdle, and, in spite of one failing, earns the name of a true knight. The poem is one of great beauty and charm of diction.

Of Arthur, the king of the Britons, record is found in the history of Nennius and many stories are told of him in the *Chronicle of the Brut*. The romance that clings to his personality has become an inalienable part of our national tradition, for Arthur and his Knights of the Round Table were the ideal heroes in the popular mind of the Middle Ages. However varied the legends, which differ in form and detail, they combine to make a poetic element that has filled our literature for ages with an imperishable fragrance of chivalry.

## THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY CHAUCER AND HIS CONTEMPORARIES **General Survey of Conditions.**

With the fourteenth century we come to a period that is one of the most important in the history and in the literature of mediæval England. The causes of this may be put under three heads.

1. A religious agitation. The same order, that of the Begging Friars, who had a century before revived a religious spirit was now the object of dislike and contempt for their self-indulgence and worldliness. People were in search of Truth and Purity and new ideals of living.

2. A spirit of revolt against authority, above all against the oppression of the poor by the nobles, was spreading through the whole labouring class. It assumed almost a religious character in that the cry of the people was all for Truth, Liberty and Freedom from tyranny.

3. A great fear had taken hold of men's minds, for the Black Death, the Plague, had visited Europe three times. The land had been laid waste by storms. The world seemed overcome by evil.

Then William Langland (born 1332 in Shropshire) came forth with a poem that went straight to the hearts of the people, for it was in the speech of the working-man. The Vision of Piers the Plowman, an allegory, was, like the older English poems, written in alliterative verse. The dream begins with a "field full of folk". Virtues and vices are personified and appear under various names. Evil seems to prevail over good. Then comes Piers Plowman to lead men onwards to search for Truth. One great remedy against evil is hard work. In the end the faithful find Truth and receive pardon. The poem ends with the praise of a righteous life. So much was this work beloved that Langland added three other poems, also allegories: 1. Do Wel, which taught men to work for themselves; 2. Do Bet, but better still, to work and help others; 3. Do Best, and best of all to strive after heavenly things. Langland by his poems written in *alliterative verse*, and plain robust speech, revived the English character of poetry, and this was a distinct advance towards forming a standard English. By his use of allegory Langland is the forerunner of the great master of English allegory, John Bunyan.\*

The feeling of religious and social unrest of this time is also evident in the work of John Wyclif (1324–1384). When at the University of Oxford this great scholar fell into disfavour by his teaching religious views quite new in that day, he retired to a country living and translated the Bible into English. By this, and by his many tracts sent out into the land he reached the common people. Thus he did for prose what Langland did for verse; again a step in advance towards the forming of the English language.

John Gower (1325–1408), a talented man, but a very different order of genius, wrote first in French, secondly in Latin. His third work had a Latin title but was written in English: *Confessio Amantis*, The Confession of a Lover. He did this by the order of Richard II. who wished to be amused by a collection of love stories. But Gower did not hesitate to reprove his royal patron or to satirize the evils of the day. For this doubtless did Chaucer call him "Moral Gower".

There could be no greater contrast to Langland with his tall gaunt figure and a voice as of one crying in the wilderness than Chaucer, courtier and man of the world. For him it remained to carry to completion, the forming of a standard English for the use of literature.

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\* see seventeenth century.

**Geoffrey Chaucer (1340 – 1400).**

Geoffrey Chaucer was the first well known poet born in London (Thames Street), and also the first to be distinctly associated with the Court. His father, a wine merchant, had dealings with the royal household, and at seventeen Geoffrey became page to the Duchess of Clarence. At nineteen he served in the army, at that time in France, was taken prisoner by the French, but ransomed. He then returned to England. When twenty-eight he wrote a poem, the *Compleynt of Pity*, and the next year another on the *Dethe of the Duchess Blanche*, wife of John of Gaunt, a relative of whose Chaucer later married. These two poems were after the French manner of writing of the time. Chaucer was sent seven times on foreign diplomatic service, and thrice he went thus to Italy, where he became inspired by the works of Dante, Petrarca and Boccaccio. Possibly he may even have met the latter. A long poem, *Troilus and Cressida*, written later, shows some of this influence, and it is evident that Chaucer had gained in tenderness of manner and vividness of style. In 1374 Chaucer was appointed Comptroller of the Wool Customs, and afterwards to other similar posts. All this brought him into touch with a great variety of men and affairs which supplied him with excellent material for his stories. He wrote many poems, amongst others a long one, the *Hous of Fame*. His style now became more and more original, and at last he shook off all foreign influence, narrating in his own graphic manner. And we begin to see his humorous side, e. g. in the poem, the *Parliament of Foules* (birds). But soon adversity befell him, for John of Gaunt, his patron, was in disfavour, and Chaucer lost his post. In 1389 luck brought him back into government employ. At length he was granted a pension and was allowed a substitute who did his work for him. Then he devoted himself to literature. He wrote his finest poems during this time, e. g. the *Legend of Good Women*, many of the *Canterbury Tales*, and above all the *Prologue* to the latter which may be considered his masterpiece. But he did not live to finish all that he had planned. In 1400 Chaucer died and was buried in the spot known as the Poets' Corner of Westminster Abbey, the first to give it the name.

Chaucer's personality. In a well known portrait of Chaucer we see him with a grave face, a forked beard, a dark dress, and a rosary in his hand. The host of the Tabard Inn rallies him on his portly figure

and dazed look, "dumb as is a stone". "Thou lookest as thou wouldest find a hare, and ever on the ground I see thee stare." Yet his writings are full of a good-humoured vivacity, a keen observation of men, as well as of a great sensitiveness to the beauties of nature. Away with all books if he can hear the lark sing or gaze at a daisy! But much as he loved these he loved human nature more. His manner of looking at life is rather that of a man of action than a man of letters, shrewd but kindly. He does not lament the existence of wrong like Langland, nor seek to introduce reforms like Wiclit. But he takes men as he finds them, holding up the good to praise and the evil to ridicule. Hence *no narrative poetry ever came more home to men than the Canterbury Tales and the Prologue to these in particular.*

**The Prologue.** Nothing could be a better framework for a picture of society in England in the fourteenth century than a pilgrimage. Pilgrims went not always from religious zeal but for love of fun or fashion. And what better excuse than a visit to the shrine of Thomas à Becket, the latest English martyr, murdered (1170) in the Cathedral of Canterbury, as popular a shrine as that of "our Lady"! And historic Canterbury is in the heart of Kent, at that time more wooded than it is now, where the oncoming spring draws out the scent of the earth and the sweet-smelling hedges. And so in the Tabard Inn, at the southern end of London Bridge, twenty nine pilgrims meet on the evening of April 16. The great noble would not join such a party, and the lowest, the son of the soil, could not, but the wide range of classes between these two was well represented. First in rank is the "very perfect gentle Knight, who though that he were worthy he were wise". He had just returned from exploits abroad and came in a spirit of devout gratitude. With him was his curly headed son, the Squire "fresh as is the month of May", accompanied by his brown faced attendant the Yeoman. The poor Parson was there, "rich of holy thought and work". "He waited after no pompe or reverence, ... But Cristes lore, and his apostles twelve, He taught, but first he followed it himself." "A Clerk there was of Oxenford also", a poor scholar who went "full threadbar" but spent all gifts of money on books. And the humble but pious Ploughman, who like his brother the parson lived "in peace and perfect charity". Kindly, but doubtless with a smile, Chaucer tells us of the Doctor of Physic who — because "gold in physic is a cordial" — "loved gold in special" (especially); of the bustling Sergeant of the Lawe (Lawyer), who "seemed busier than he really was"; of the dainty Prioress, a model of good

breeding, who spoke French of Stratford atte Bowe\* readily, "for French of Paris was to her unknowe", and did not "wet her fingers in her sauce deeply". She had a fine face and figure and wore a gold brooch bearing the words: *Amor vincit omnia* (Love conquers all). These are chiefly of the well educated class. But the commercial class is also represented by a Merchant with a "forked beard" who traded with Flanders, and the Wife of Bath who made cloth at home as good as any in Ghent. "Bold was her face and fair, and red of hue," "and on her head a hat as broad As is a buckler or a targe" (target). With her loud laugh and common manners she is a sharp contrast to the elegant Prioress. None are so severely dealt with by Chaucer as the worldly Monk, the mischief-making Friar, and above all the Pardoner who went about selling sham relics and extorting money from the poorest. A miscellaneous group of humbler folk, and a hospitable farmer or Franklin complete the party who had taken lodgings at the Tabard for the night. At supper they agree to the host's proposition that each one should tell two tales on the way towards, and two more on the way home from Canterbury. At break of day, while watering their horses before starting, they draw lots, by which the Knight becomes the first story-teller. But only twenty-four Canterbury Tales has Chaucer given us of the large number promised. Yet if these Canterbury Tales were all that Chaucer left us, he would still *rank as our greatest English story-teller in verse*. His best drawn characters are so life-like that we see them before us, and his sense of humour is only equalled by his sense of pathos. What he has written in prose does not belong to his best work.

Chaucer's tales are chosen from the whole vast field of mediæval romance. Tales familiar in many lands reappear here, e. g. the story of Patient Griseldis, the subject of Chaucer's Clerk's Tale.

Chaucer's Prologue to the Canterbury Tales is written in the heroic couplet (see below). This is the case with much of his later, mature work. He also adapted from the Italian the seven-line stanza, which is sometimes changed to the six-line, or lengthened to the eight-line stanza, as in the Monk's Tale. Above all, Chaucer made of English a *literary language*, and set up a standard of excellence for all who should come after him. He has inspired later poets who have seen in him our first great English artist, and "the Father of English Poetry".

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\* Stratford at the Bowe; convent school near London.

## THE BEGINNING OF THE PROLOGUE TO THE CANTERBURY TALES.

Whan that Aprille<sup>1</sup> with his shoures soote<sup>2</sup>  
 The droghte of Marche hath perced to the roote,  
 And bathed every veyne in swich<sup>3</sup> licour  
 Of which vertu<sup>4</sup> engendred<sup>5</sup> is the flour<sup>6</sup>;  
 Whan Zephyrus<sup>7</sup> eek<sup>8</sup> with his swete<sup>9</sup> breeth  
 Inspired hath in every holt and heeth<sup>10</sup>  
 The tendre croppes<sup>11</sup>, and the yonge sonne<sup>12</sup>  
 Hath in the Ram<sup>13</sup> his halfe cours y-ronne<sup>14</sup>,  
 And smale fowles maken melodye,  
 That slepen al the night with open ye  
 (So priketh<sup>15</sup> hem<sup>16</sup> nature in hir<sup>17</sup> corages<sup>18</sup>):  
 Than longen folk to goon on pilgrimage,  
 And palmers<sup>19</sup> for to seken straunge strondes<sup>20</sup>,  
 To ferne halwes<sup>21</sup>, couthe<sup>22</sup> in sondry londes;  
 And specially, from every shires ende  
 Of Engelond, to Caunterbury they wende<sup>23</sup>,  
 The holy blisful martir<sup>24</sup> for to seke<sup>25</sup>,  
 That hem hath holpen whan that they were seke.<sup>26</sup>

The Middle English of the fourteenth century had lost many of the inflections of the noun, verb and adjective. It had also absorbed a number of French words, e. g. see lines quoted, *perced*, *veyne*, *pilgrimage*. The pronunciation of the vowel sounds is similar to that of the Continent but not that now used in England. Chaucer's verse, if read with the pronunciation of his day, is perfect in its rhythm.

## The Northern Poets.

From Chaucer's day to the sixteenth century England can boast of no prominent poets. The voice of poesy was not altogether silent. Both Hoccleve and Lydgate strove to be imitators of Chaucer, but were too far behind him to be mentioned here. For true poetry we must turn northward to the Scotch who spoke the rugged northern English. First among such, as a royal poet, is James I. of Scotland (1394–1437) best known as the author of a long allegorical poem, "The King's

1 A trisyllable. 2 sweet. 3 such. 4 force; influence. 5 produced. 6 flower. 7 the west wind in spring. 8 also. 9 sweet.

10 grove and meadow. 11 buds. 12 the sun is called young because just beginning his yearly course. 13 the first constellation of the zodiac.

14 past participle of the verb *ronnen*, "to run"; the prefix *y-* or *i-* indicates this form of the verb. Cf. the German *ge*. 15 urgeth. 16 them.

17 their. 18 hearts or spirits. 19 those who went to the Holy Land and brought back with them palm branches as an evidence of their pilgrimage.

20 foreign shores. 21 distant shrines. 22 past participle of *conne*, "to know", from the Anglo-Saxon *cunnan*. 23 go. 24 Thomas à Becket. 25 seke, to seek. 26 seke, sick, ill.

Quhair" (i. e. book, quire). On his way to France he had been taken captive by the English, and, during eighteen years of imprisonment in London he received an excellent education. His poem shows that he carefully studied and tried to imitate Chaucer. For it is in the seven-line stanza called after the poet, *the royal stanza*, that he tells the story of his love for the beautiful lady whom he saw from his prison window. She became his queen and returned with him to Scotland. The faithful devotion and tragic death of this royal pair has been sung by a modern poet, Rossetti.\*

William Dunbar (1465–1580) ranks as the greatest of these early Scottish poets and is the best of Chaucer's northern followers. When in England he seems to have had a share in arranging the marriage of James IV. of Scotland with Margaret Tudor, daughter of Henry VII. of England. To celebrate this union Dunbar wrote a nature-allegory in seven-line stanza called, "The Thistle and the Rose", the thistle used as the emblem of Scotland, the rose, of England. But Dunbar was most of all original and satirical in the description of a vision, "The Dance of the Seven Deadly Sins". The poem is somewhat in the manner of the mystery-plays. It is in irregular metre, full of vivid character-painting and grim humour tinged with levity. For this Dunbar has been called the fore-runner of Burns in such poems as "Tam o' Shanter".\*\*

### The Early Ballads to 1500.

The ballads of England and Scotland were a prominent feature of the popular life of the Middle Ages. Few, comparatively, of the great number have been preserved, but these give us a picture of the times when the yeoman, the poor man, resented the tyranny of the wealthy and noble. There grew out of the romances songs sung with music or dancing which had circulated through the country before Langland's day. Stories of heroes, real or imaginary, were multiplied, the greatest favourite being the outlaw Robin Hood. With his merry men he lived a free and lawless life in Sherwood Forest, attacking the rich but befriending the poor and helpless. The many ballads connected with this popular idol were later collected under the title of, "A Lytel Jeste of Robin Hood". Other heroes and other deeds were sung, and other themes such as faithful love formed the subjects of many more ballads. And all the people sang them when they met together to make merry.

\* see nineteenth century.    \*\* see eighteenth century.

In Scotland, where every little chieftain lived in enmity with some neighbour or with the common English foe across the border, the ballads tell of brave deeds in battle, of fierce clan-hatred and the tragic death of a hero. Such are the Battle of Otterburn; Chevy Chase; the Death of the Douglas etc. where the short stirring lines have been compared to a trumpet call. A ballad of great pathos is of the hero Sir Patrick Spens, who in faithful service to his King finds death in a watery grave. Here we feel the grim spirit of the North, as a wintry wind from the ice-bound sea. The story told simply in four-line stanza carries us along with breathless interest. A seventeenth century writer says with truth, "More solid things do not shew the complexion of the times so well as ballads".\*

### The Dawn of the Drama.

The beginnings of the drama in England are to be traced to the efforts of the clergy to teach the unlearned, the people, stories from the Bible or the lives of Saints. The introduction into the Church services of a dialogue in which two would take part led by degrees to the acting of scenes connected with the festivals of Christmas and Easter. The festival of a popular saint came to be celebrated in the same way. The first record of such is that of the Miracle Play of St. Catherine composed in French about 1110 by the master of a convent school for his pupils. Subjects were taken from Old Testament Stories, e. g. The Creation, Sacrifice of Isaac, Isaac and Esau, Balaam and his ass. They included imaginative scenes also, such as the Fall of the Angels, the Day of Judgment or Doomsday. Plays illustrating the chief doctrines or "mysteries" of the Church, and scenes from the New Testament taken from the Church lessons for the year were known as Mysteries or Mystery Plays. When the subjects were taken from the lives of Saints they came to be known as Miracle Plays.

As these plays became more and more popular, laymen began to act in them. Towards the end of the thirteenth century the guilds of various towns took over the management of complete sets of plays to be acted out-of-doors, each guild having one scene. The performances often continued for a week. The "pageant", or stage, moved on four wheels and consisted of a lower room where the actors dressed, and an upper room or platform for the play. After a performance the "pageant" was moved

\* John Selden, Table Talk, 1687.

on to the next "station". One play is said to have been repeated twelve times on one day. Some attention was paid to dress; Pilate and King Herod had gorgeous attire. In "Noah's Flood," a board bore the names of the animals taken into the Ark. In this popular play Noah's wife is energetic in her refusal to enter the Ark; her part was always to be comic. When Noah gains his point, he devoutly returns thanks to his Maker. Thus mirth and earnest follow each other quickly. The comic elements were developed in the parts of the commonest people, such as the shepherds at the Nativity. This was not due to an irreverent spirit, but done in all simplicity and naïve good will.

Several sets of plays preserved to us are known as 1. The York, 2. Coventry, 3. Wakefield (or Towneley), 4. Chester Plays. The first belongs to the festival of Corpus Christi, the last to Whitsuntide.

### The Arthur Legends.

Sir Thomas Malory (died 1471) gave to his countrymen in the "Morte d'Arthur" a treasure-hoard for future poets and all lovers of our national legends. From the great mass of stories that had grown around the name of King Arthur Malory compiled, and reproduced a series of tales that had a character of unity. The style was picturesque and romantic as befitted the subject. The quaintness of the language which is however quite intelligible, adds an indefinable charm to passages of pathos or stories of prowess. The Morte d'Arthur which sums up the chivalry of the age that was closed, is the first book that owes its preservation solely to the great invention of the new age then beginning, the *art of printing*. The manuscript was eventually lost but not till after Caxton had printed the work in 1485. Two of these impressions are still preserved.

The name of William Caxton (died 1491) printer, deserves honourable mention in every history of English literature. This far-seeing and industrious Englishman brought with him from the Continent, where he had learnt it, the art of printing to England. He united an enthusiasm for romance and old stories with a keen business capacity. He recognized the supreme merit of Chaucer and the never fading charm of the Arthur legends. And both these he printed, thereby giving them a form not only more permanent, but more accessible to the average reader. Books printed had a wider circulation among the nation in general than could be the case with the handi-work of scribe or monk. Caxton opened up to many avenues of literary pleasures that had been till then only open to the few. A debt of gratitude is owing to Caxton from all Englishmen who love their country's literature.

## PERIOD III

### FROM 1500 TO THE DEATH OF SHAKESPEARE\*

The Renaissance · The New Learning · The Elizabethan Drama  
Shakespeare · Decline of the Drama · Prose

#### THE RENAISSANCE IN ENGLAND

The Passing of the Middle Ages and the Coming of the Renaissance. The last quarter of the fifteenth century brought with it the great change that was felt like a mighty pulse-beat throughout all the civilized world to which it came as the herald of a new life. It sounded the knell of the Middle Ages, the passing of old things, for all things were becoming new. A new world across the seas offered a new field for the energies of man. Hearts were stirred, imagination was stimulated, and fancy took higher flights into the unknown. England had her full share in this awakening to a life of new possibilities. Englishmen were fired with a desire to explore America, and their travels sowed the seeds of enterprise that in time founded colonies all over the globe. Another world opened its stores of wealth to the English people, the world of literature. The great invention of printing was made use of readily by Caxton for the benefit of the ordinary reader. Reading became more general when printed books of romances were multiplied and began to circulate in the land. Thus the ways were being opened up for those who sought for beauty or for knowledge.

The characteristic, then, of the sixteenth century is a great increase in intellectual vitality in all directions, a time that in England, as elsewhere, has been known as the Renaissance.

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\* After the year 1500, most of the chief works here mentioned will be found represented in "Readings in English Literature" by the author of this book.

**The New Learning.** One of the first movements showed itself in Oxford where learned men, just fresh from studying Latin and Greek in Italy, began to revive the study of these classical tongues. These **Humanists**, as they were called, did little to further directly the progress of English literature. But they filled men's minds with a thirst for great ideas and taught them to admire the perfection of form found in the ancient writers. And this was the beginning of the foreign influences which soon became evident in the English writers of the time. The nobility were the first to feel the benefit of the Humanist movement. King Henry VIII. who was a good judge of letters, patronized learning. And thus nobles of his court began to favour a greater polish in the use of their own tongue. One of the finest minds of the day, Sir Thomas More, Lord High Chancellor of England, introduced a new form of *historical writing*. Although he left unfinished his two histories (of Edward V. and Richard III.) he shows himself to be a historian in the modern sense, one who not only records events but traces cause and effect. His letters addressed to his wife and daughter, just before his cruel execution, (by order of Henry VIII.) are written in a style full of pathos and simple dignity. The book for which More is best known is his *Utopia*. This is an account of a supposed ideal Commonwealth. At first written in Latin, it was later translated into English. It created a new English word, *Utopian*, i. e. something visionary and impracticable. We shall see that in another reign another English word was created by the exaggerated effort to introduce fine writing.

A notable feature of this period was the wide-spread interest taken in religious and theological matters. Although the motives of Henry VIII. in separating from the Church of Rome were personal and political, men of a spiritual mind followed in the footsteps of Wyclif. This showed itself in a fresh rendering of the Bible into English of the time by William Tyndale and Miles Coverdale. It affected all the religious prose that came after it, and was "the most important literary fact of Henry VIII.'s reign".

*The influence of Italian literature* now brought a new element into English poetry. The poet of Henry VII.'s court, Skelton, had written his satires in a rugged verse with an occasional couplet of a tenderer kind. But before the middle of the sixteenth century two Englishmen, Sir Thomas Wyatt (1503–1542) and Henry Howard Earl of Surrey (1516–1547) brought back from Italy new theories as to poetic form. Poetry is now no longer to be used for satires written against some

party or personal foe. It is to be a polished form of verse expressing a well chosen sentiment or a neatly turned compliment. And for this the sonnet form, of which Petrarca was master, is admirably adapted. Wyatt and Surrey (the former a fervent admirer of Petrarca) were the first English poets to write sonnets in their own tongue. They also used the rhyming verse known in Italy as the *terza-rima*. But of still greater importance is their *introduction of blank verse*, the unrhymed line of ten syllables. The dramatist, Sackville, first used this for the drama. It remained for the two greatest Elizabethans to bring it to perfection; Marlowe and Shakespeare.

The Early Drama and its Development to the first half of the sixteenth Century. In the early part of the fifteenth century the Mystery Plays showed signs of a new development. Allegorical figures representing abstract ideas began to take part in the play. Out of this grew the Morality Play which was no longer based on subjects taken from the Scriptures. The plot was invented for the purpose of teaching moral truths and the characters were abstract ideas personified. This was far less picturesque than the old plays, but was nevertheless a step towards more independence and more originality in dramatic writing. Moreover the fight between good and evil is not only that of religion against the powers of darkness, it is a personal conflict in the inner man, of his better nature against temptations around him. The tedious Moralities, for such they often were, were enlivened by the introduction between the scenes of clownish tricks and rough play by Vice, the spirit of mischief. These *interludes* became in time an independent play, and formed "the connecting link between the Mediæval and Renaissance drama". John Heywood was the best known writer of Interludes in Henry VIII.'s reign. He introduced real people in place of allegorical figures. There is a hard, worldly tone about his plays of which the chief is that of the "Four P's". In it all the interest turns on the point as to who can tell the biggest lie. The man who succeeds in doing so has merely observed that he never yet saw a woman out of patience!

With the revival of the study of classics Latin plays were translated or imitated. A schoolmaster, Nicholas Udall, who was stimulated by a play of Plautus, wrote about the middle of the sixteenth century, *the first English comedy*, Ralph Royster Doyster. As its name implies it is full of boisterous mirth, all the chief fun depending on the reading of a letter in two different ways, according to different methods of

punctuation. A plot quite worthy of a schoolmaster! The same kind of uproarious fun is to be found in another childish farce of that time, one divided into five acts, *Gammer Gurton's Needle*. Play-writing now became more general, Latin plays continued to be translated with more or less success. But English dramatic art had still a long stride to take before we know it as Elizabethan drama.

## THE ELIZABETHAN ERA

### The First Twenty Years (1559–1579).

We are now approaching the Golden Age of English literature when the national life was the natural background for a literary productiveness such as has never since been equalled. Life had become more healthily intense; vibrating with interest; sparkling with good humour; alive with a power of expression that was more universal than had yet been known. A dramatic sense awoke and stood on tip-toe, ready to see what there was to be seen. A feeling for melody found vent in a glad outburst of song. Music was more generally cultivated, and French lyrics had been eagerly studied. And these two facts doubtless helped in the sudden outpouring of short lyrics, of musical verse of *intense sweetness and perfectly artistic form*. And most surprising of all is the fact that men untrained, and unknown as poets, seemed able to supply these dainty verses readily and abundantly. There is an indescribable charm in these Elizabethan lyrics that has stood the test of time. *Music was in the air*, and England was in truth Merry England. Queen Elizabeth, haughtily gracious and capriciously kind, took a high place in the hearts of her full-blooded subjects. They paid her an exaggerated homage prompted by old-time chivalry combined with patriotic enthusiasm for a sovereign who shared the glory of England's name. The impossible ideal of her played a part in their poems, till at length we find it immortalized as the *Gloriana* of Spenser's world of romance. The first twenty years of Elizabeth's reign form a period of preparation for the greatness that was to come, the true Elizabethan Era. A love of splendour marked all that Elizabeth did, and a desire to be splendid began to extend to literature.

It took the shape of a prose story by John Lyly (1579) which described in two parts the travels of a young man, Euphues. Its aim was to correct the roughness of prose as generally used, and to *create a highly polished style of writing*. But the book was full of far-fetched

pictures and fantastic extravagances. It was so popular that to talk *Euphuism* came to be the height of fashion. But its gorgeous exaggerations which pleased so much at first became afterwards a subject for ridicule. This effort to introduce a more polite manner of speech did not entirely miss its mark, for it pointed out *the need to those who knew a better way*. For the second time a new word was coined in our language, *Euphuism*, i. e. the affected or *Euphuistic* manner of the novel *Euphues*.

### **The Golden Age of English Literature. From 1579 to the Death of Shakespeare (1616).**

The year in which Llyl's *Euphues* appeared was alike the last of the time of preparation and the first of the period that glows with great names and above all the greatest name of our literature, *Shakespeare*.

A remarkable feature of this age was the rare combination of varied talents to be found in one and the same man. And thus a graceful courtier and a gallant soldier and an ideal knight was too a poet, nay more, a critic, Sir Philip Sidney (1554–1586). He followed Wyatt and Surrey in that he wrote sonnets, and belongs as they to the school of *amourists*, i. e. writers of lyrics dealing with love as the chief theme. His best known works are, his pastoral romance Arcadia, a fantastic story written under Spanish influence, and his Defence of Poetrie, which is important as being the first attempt at criticism in English literature. It was the earliest sign of a study which has since become a fine art.

Sidney's friend Edmund Spenser (1552–1599) is the first to be ranked among the greatest names of this age. Spenser was born in London, took his degree at Cambridge, and through the influence of Sidney's uncle, the Earl of Leicester, received an appointment in Ireland. This country, then in a wild state and semi-barbarous condition, was a fitting background for the great poet who now began to write the Faery Queene. When Spenser, after nine years' absence, revisited England (1589) he brought with him the first three books of his poem. His friend Sir Walter Raleigh, a man of brilliant talents and also of a good business capacity, had been the one to recognize first the merit of this wonderful work. He knew well that the shortest cut to fame was through royal favour. The Court was the centre of all greatness, of wit, learning and literary ambition. Here Spenser was presented by Raleigh to the Queen, and the poet's delight knew no bounds. In spite

of his integrity he joined in the extravagant flattery of Elizabeth to whom he read parts of the poem that he had dedicated to her. The Queen, gratified at the compliment paid her, bestowed a pension for life on the poet. Spenser returned to Ireland and completed three more books of his work. He failed to win the hearts of the native Irish, and so, when an insurrection took place (in 1598) Spenser's home, Kilcolman Castle, was burnt to the ground. He and his family escaped to England. But he died a few months later, broken in spirit and poor. He lies buried in the Poets' Corner near the grave of Chaucer.

Spenser's shorter poems alone would rank him high as a poet, e. g. *The Shepherd's Calender* which contains a pastoral poem for every month in the year, and which points to classical influence. *Epi-thalamium*, which together with several sonnets tells how he wooed and won his wife.

But Spenser's fame rests on the *Faery Queene*. It contained his message to his generation. Spenser aimed at holding up to the world the ideal of virtue and valour which every man should strive to attain. And he goes back to the old Celtic story of Arthur, the very perfection of knighthood, as a framework round which to twine his twofold allegory. The poem offers great difficulties to the inexperienced reader, for it does not tell its own story. The *Faery Queene* never once appears in it. We know the plan of the whole only from Spenser's letter to Raleigh, thus:

In Prince Arthur is found the union of all the virtues. Twelve cardinal virtues are represented each by one of twelve knights who bears the name as his title of honour. Such are the knights of *Holiness*, of *Temperance*, the lady knight *Britomartis* or *Purity*, etc. These knights serve the *Faery Queene*, who sends them out on adventures testing their virtue and valour. The whole poem was to consist of twelve books, each book to tell of one knight and his deeds. But only six books were written, so that the work is a fragment. The first book opens after a festival held by the *Faery Queene* during which a lady in distress comes to seek help. The Red Cross Knight, *Holiness*, is thereupon commanded by the *Queene* to go forth to the lady's aid clad in the armour of righteousness. We follow him pricking, i. e. riding across a wild desolate land where dangers abound, where monsters are lurking in caves, where savage tribes have to be faced, and a dragon appears, big as a hill with great wings and sharp claws. And amongst all these wanders a helpless lady on a white steed who finds protection with a noble lion. It is a world of magic with strange adventures breaking the thread of the main story. But in the end The Red Cross Knight is victorious and rescues his lady *Una*, and weds her.

Spenser's poem is in the spirit of his time; for its wealth of imagery, its gorgeous pictures show the influence of the Renaissance. But the best that mediæval literature has to offer is also represented in the Faery Queene; the Arthur legends; the use of *allegory* of which Langland was the first master; and lastly the melodious verse of Chaucer our first great artist poet. To the eight-line stanza used by Chaucer in the Monk's Tale Spenser added a ninth, a line of twelve syllables that has a middle pause. This ninth line, or Alexandrine, has given to the stanza its peculiar character, for which it is known as the *Spenserian stanza*.

But this, the greatest imaginative poem since Chaucer, has its defects. The spiritual allegory of moral perfection is intertwined with the second or historical allegory. Queen Elizabeth who is the lady knight Britomart in the first, appears in the second as Gloriana, the glory of her country. The interruption of the spiritual story by the flattery of the Queen, and the sudden allusions to people or events now forgotten mar the unity of the whole. After the first two books the poem becomes very confused.

The details of a scene are dwelt on with a diffuseness that is wearisome. The abundance is often oppressive; it is like "wading among unmown grass". The language is intentionally that of an earlier age, beautiful in itself but marred at times by a capricious altering of words in the manner of the French of that time.

In what then does the charm of the poem consist? In the nobleness of the poet's aim, his high ideals of what man owes to man. In the stately grandeur of the great procession that passes before us, which, with all its defects, reveals a sense of beauty for which Spenser has been named "the poet's poet".

### THE FAERY QUEENE

#### Una and the Red Cross Knight.

A gentle Knight was pricking<sup>1</sup> on the plaine,  
Ycladd<sup>2</sup> in mightie armes and silver shielde,  
Wherein old dints of deepe woundes did remaine,  
The cruell markes of many a bloody fielde;  
Yet armes till that time did he never wield.  
His angry steede did chide his foming bit,  
As much disdayning to the curbe to yield:  
Full jolly<sup>3</sup> knight he seemed, and faire did sit,  
As one for knightly guists<sup>4</sup> and fierce encounters fit.

Book I. Canto I.

1 riding fast. 2 clothed, equipped. 3 comely, handsome. 4 jousts.

### The Elizabethan Drama.

Meanwhile the dramatic feeling of the nation continued to develop, and plays were written more frequently than before. Companies of actors were formed, often under the patronage of a nobleman. A very popular entertainment at the houses of the great, and even at the Court, was the *masque*, a fanciful play of an allegorical nature written to suit a festive occasion. The members of the family or circle for whom it was composed sometimes took part as actors. Generally speaking, comedies were vulgar, and historical plays badly constructed. But these attempts showed an effort towards progress. And a most important step was taken when *blank verse* was made use of in the *first tragedy*, *Gorboduc*, by Sackville.

### The performance of a play.

For this the courtyard of an inn was frequently chosen. And when the early theatres were built (beginning 1576) the main part of the enclosure had no roof; that covered only the stage and the gallery. The usual time for a play to begin was three o'clock in the afternoon. It was announced by the blowing of trumpets and the hoisting of a flag. Then appeared on the stage a black-robed figure as *Prologue*. This helped to bring about order among the rough crowd that had long before filled the middle space or yard, for the entrance fee here was a mere trifle. When the prologue was ended, the curtains parted and the acting began. Between the acts a clown often amused the audience and even continued to do so during the play, and after it was over. Occasionally an epilogue, as we see it in *As You Like It*, closed the performance. Before leaving the stage the actors, kneeling, prayed for the Queen. There was no scenery as we know such. The unspoilt playgoer of those days expected nothing more than such indications as a piece of furniture, or a sign post to guide his imagination. He had far more "*dramatic illusion*" because less was offered to the eye. Costumes were often the cast off clothes of a nobleman of the time sold to the actors by his man-servant. No effort was made to be historically accurate. All women's parts were acted by men and boys in masks. No woman appeared upon the stage before the year 1660. In a theatre of this primitive nature did the young man William Shakespeare first see what London had to offer of dramatic art when he came to that great city to seek employment.

While he was slowly ripening for the great work of the future,

others had tried their hand at the drama and were unconsciously preparing the way for their great rival. The author of "Euphues", John Lyly, wrote plays in prose, rhyme and blank verse in which the dialogue was brilliant with wit. George Peele wrote lyric and dramatic verse of marked sweetness. Robert Greene who was the first to allude to Shakespeare, — but in a spirit of envy, — brought scenes of country life into the drama. Of this group, often known as "Shakespeare's predecessors", there was but one whose work directly led up to that of Shakespeare,

### Christopher Marlowe (1564 – 1593).

Born at Canterbury in the same year as Shakespeare, Marlowe was a young man of brilliant gifts and of a fiery temperament. He was killed in a quarrel in his thirtieth year, but in six years of work he had written several dramas. The first was about Tamburlaine\* the Great, he who craved to conquer all nations. In this Marlowe used blank verse with such creative skill that it became henceforth the acknowledged metre of tragedy. In the rolling, resonant lines we seem to hear the rumbling wheels of Tamburlaine's triumphal car when the Tartar tyrant advances on his conquering way. As a drama it is lacking in construction, but with it dramatic verse made a very great advance. "Marlowe's mighty line", as Ben Jonson called it, occasionally shows a tendency to be bombastic, yet from this time blank verse began to be "a magnificent instrument of melody". In the Tragedy of Edward II., the murdered king, there is a power and pathos in the last scene that has hardly been surpassed by Shakespeare in his Richard II. Marlowe's play undoubtedly suggested much to his great successor and was in itself an improvement in the construction of historical drama. Marlowe's masterpiece is The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus, who for twenty-four years of knowledge and power "lost eternal joy and felicity". The closing scene has been ranked as one of the finest in Elizabethan tragedy. When Faustus' last hour approaches he utters a heartrending cry of terror:

"Stand still; you ever moving spheres of heaven,  
That time may cease, and midnight never come!"

The tragedy ends with lines by the Chorus that could well be applied to Marlowe himself,

"Cut is the branch that might have grown full straight".

\* Timurlan.

Gœthe greatly admired this "psychological poem in dramatic form". The drama of the Jew of Malta somewhat resembles The Merchant of Venice. When Marlowe died, Shakespeare had written few of his earlier plays. Marlowe's tempestuous nature accounts for many defects in his work, exaggeration in his conceptions, a pagan defiance of religion, a lack of humour, etc., but with a great stride he brought the drama up to the point where only Shakespeare could take it on further towards perfection.

### William Shakespeare (1564 – 1616).

#### His Life and Works.

Stratford-on-Avon in the heart of the Midland counties of England was the home of the poet who still holds the highest place in the hearts of his countrymen. On the one side, not far off, was Sherwood Forest associated with the legends of Robin Hood. And on the other, the land of romance, the home of Celtic traditions, Wales. In the spring time of the year when many a pilgrim of old set forth to visit some favourite shrine, there was born the child whose birthplace was to be a shrine sought in after ages by pilgrims from many lands.

April 26 is the recorded date of the baptism of William, son of John Shakespeare, a well-to-do burgess of Stratford and a small landowner. He could kill his own cattle, and sell meat, or cure the hides and make gloves, which explains why he has been called both butcher and glove-maker. John rose in importance and became first, alderman, then High Bailiff of his town. Shakespeare's mother was Mary Arden, of a "gentle" family, i. e. of better social standing than her husband. They are said to have known little or nothing of reading and writing, but they sent their son William to the excellent Grammar School of Stratford. Among John Shakespeare's duties would be the arranging of entertainments and the receiving of strolling players. Doubtless his son Will looked on eagerly at all such performances, perhaps even going to see the "pageants" of the Mysteries at Coventry, a town not far off. When the boy was about eleven years old Queen Elizabeth came to Kenilworth where the great revels were held that Sir Walter Scott has described in his novel Kenilworth. We do not know, but we may assume William Shakespeare would not willingly miss that gorgeous spectacle. Two years later John Shakespeare began to lose property and became quite a poor man. His son left school, and it is not on record how he was occupied at this trying time. At

the age of eighteen William Shakespeare married Anne Hathaway, a young woman in the neighbourhood, who was eight years his senior. During the four following years three children were born to him. We next hear of his going, when about twenty-two, to London, perhaps to find some better means of supporting his family. There is a story of poaching connected with this time that was long accepted as true but which is recently discredited by several scholars.

We now begin to follow Shakespeare in his career. The first start was of a humble nature, and the slow growth of the poet's development has often been emphasized. He is said to have been employed in some minor post at a theatre. While there he evidently kept his eyes open as to the possibilities for his own future in dramatic art. We have seen that a large number of plays in a somewhat crude form had already been written before Shakespeare's time; and amongst others the *historie* or *historical play*. Here was material ready to hand; and by remodelling such a one Shakespeare produced *Henry VI. Part I.* He was learning his trade and feeling his way.

Therefore, with reason has this, the *first period* of work, been called In the Workshop. More old plays were worked over, but when Shakespeare was twenty-seven his first original play was acted, Love's Labour Lost. In this he makes fun of *Euphuism*, the fashion of the day. In the next year his first tragedy appears, Romeo and Juliet, the sad story of two hapless lovers. About this time two epic poems are published, Venus and Adonis, and Lucrece; also his early Sonnets. Shakespeare was undoubtedly getting known, for, at Christmas 1594, when he was thirty, he was officially commanded to act before the Queen and Court. Elizabeth was so much pleased that she added a present of money to the sum paid for three performances. The dramatist gratefully acknowledged the compliment in Midsummer Night's Dream by an allusion to the Queen of sixty years as, "a fair vestal thronèd by the west"! More historical plays followed and the boisterous comedy; The Taming of the Shrew complete this *first period*.

His *second period* is named In the World, for his apprentice days were over. The historical plays and the delightful comedies of this period are each the best of their kind, Henry IV. Parts I, II, Henry V. and the popular Merchant of Venice, As you Like It, Twelfth Night and The Merry Wives of Windsor. In 1599 Shakespeare was part owner of the Globe Theatre where his plays were acted. But in the midst of prosperity he was overwhelmed by

sorrow. His son died; two of his chief friends and patrons lost royal favour, and a third, the Earl of Essex was executed. The tragedy of Julius Cæsar points to this time of sad experience.

The period that follows is named Out of The Depths, and to it belong his masterpieces of tragedy, Hamlet, Othello, Macbeth, and King Lear. The comedies of, Measure for Measure, and All's Well that Ends Well prove that Shakespeare could rise above his sadness.

By the next, *the fourth period\**, On the Heights, he seems to have triumphed over his sorrows. Some plays of this time breathe a sweet serenity as the period draws to a close. After the sterner subjects such as Antony and Cleopatra, Coriolanus, Timon etc., we approach an atmosphere of innocent mirth, a sense of enchantment, in the romances of The Winter's Tale, and The Tempest. The last play like his first, was historical, — a fitting close for a patriotic dramatist, — Henry VIII. in which he worked with Fletcher. After twenty years of active life Shakespeare, who had never ceased to love his native town, retired to Stratford-on-Avon, 1612. Here he had already bought property and, at his home New Place he lived the last four years of his life. Shakespeare died April 23, 1616, which day according to tradition was his birthday. He lies buried in Stratford Parish Church and his tomb bears this inscription:

Good frend, for Jesus' sake forbear  
To digg the dust enclosed heare:  
Bleste be the man that spares thes stones,  
And curst be he that moves my bones.

"Sweet Master Shakespeare" as his friends called him was "very good company and of a very ready and pleasant smooth wit," known for "his uprightness of dealing which argues his honesty." Ben Jonson, his comrade and fellow actor says: "I loved the man, and *do honour his memory on this side idolatry* as much as any. He was indeed honest and of an open and free nature." But his marked superiority over them all seems to have passed unnoticed; neither did Shakespeare lay claim to such. He wrote for the glory of his company of actors and he acted in order to earn his living. That he made a financial success of it is seen by the fact that he retired with a good income.

As an actor Shakespeare took the part of Adam in As you Like It, and the ghost in Hamlet whose last words are: "Remember me!" The world has not forgotten him who personated the ghost. In spite of

\* The names of these four periods are adapted from Prof. Dowden's Primer of Shakespeare.

## Analyses of Shakespeare's Plays.

## RICHARD II.

This play takes us back to the time in which Chaucer lived. The weakness of this handsome but unreliable monarch has aroused the distrust of the nation whose rights he has disregarded, and whose sense of right he has outraged by the murder of his own uncle. It is small wonder that the king's own cousin Bolingbroke should contemplate wresting the power from Richard and becoming king himself. The banishment of this Bolingbroke, at the beginning of the play but serves to increase the king's unpopularity with his subjects. When Richard leaves England to subdue a rebellion in Ireland, Bolingbroke, Duke of Hereford, returns at the head of an army and Richard's cause is lost. A foreboding of evil had seized the aged John of Gaunt and, feeling the approach of death, he warns the king that he too is sick, far more sick than the dying man, for his honour is gone. "Landlord of England art thou now, not king": The short-sighted Richard who has fed on the flattery of favourites is unable to meet his difficulties with manliness and resolution. Henry, Duke of Hereford, knows how to assume a kingly bearing, and he justifies his usurpation of the throne by proving that he is a ruler born, one, it is true, actuated by ambition, but whose firm hand may avert the disasters that befall a country under a king who is swayed by favourites. Richard is murdered; and just before the end a little pity is excited in us by his passing dignity, and his enquiry of the groom regarding his own horse that had proudly borne the usurper on his triumphal entrance into the city. The murder scene of this play has been compared to that of Edward II. by Marlowe, from which Shakespeare is said to have received some suggestions. Richard II. with its many rhymed lines belongs to an early period of Shakespeare's work. (See Chronology). The most noted piece in the play is John of Gaunt's speech on England:

"This happy breed of men, this little world,  
This precious stone set in a silver sea."

## THE MERCHANT OF VENICE

In this play there are two stories linked together with utmost dramatic skill. Antonio, a royal merchant of Venice is loved by all except the rich but miserly Jew, the money-lender Shylock, who hates him for lending out money to poor people without taking any interest for it. Bassanio, Antonio's great friend is about to marry a very beautiful and wealthy lady, Portia of Belmont, but not having the means to appear before her in all the splendour necessary to the suitor of so rich a lady, he borrows from Antonio three thousand ducats. The latter, who has not so much money at his disposal, borrows the sum from Shylock, who makes him sign a bond that if he does not repay the money by a certain day he will forfeit a pound of flesh, to be taken from any part of his body. Bassanio goes to Belmont where three caskets are placed before him. He chooses the right one, that which contains Portia's picture. A short time after his marriage Bassanio receives the news that Antonio's ships laden with merchandise have not returned in time, that An-

tonio, unable to pay the Jew on the day fixed has been sent to prison, and that the Jew insists on having a pound of flesh from Antonio's body. Bassanio hurries to Venice to assist at his friend's trial and to offer three times the sum if the Jew would only spare Antonio's life. Portia then appears in the disguise of a young lawyer and saves his life by pointing out that the bond allows the Jew to take a pound of Antonio's flesh but not a single drop of his blood. The Jew is severely punished; half of his riches must go to the State, the other half he is to leave to his daughter Jessica, whom he has cast off for having married Lorenzo, a Christian. Finally he is forced to renounce his faith and to turn Christian.

### JULIUS CÆSAR

The play opens with Cæsar's glorious return from the war against Pompey. The people are just about to celebrate the feast of Lupercalia and to lead Cæsar with great procession to see the race. But there are several men of rank among them, such as Cassius, Casca and others who grudge him his triumphs, who are envious of Cæsar. They form a plot against him and succeed in winning over the noble minded influential Brutus to their party and making him the head of the conspiracy. Brutus who has been loved tenderly by Cæsar, and who loves him likewise with all his heart, consents to join the conspirators out of pure patriotism. He is a republican and considers his country to be in danger if Cæsar should accept the crown the people are going to offer him. A soothsayer stops Cæsar in the street and warns him of the Ides of March, but he pays no heed. The fatal time approaches, Cæsar goes to the Capitol where he is attacked in cold blood by the conspirators and stabbed to death. Brutus, after having explained to the people why they have done this bloody deed, allows Mark Antony, Cæsar's friend, to speak on the market-place of Rome at Cæsar's funeral, which he does brilliantly, his words going right to the heart of the people (while Brutus appealed to their reason) so that by the end of his speech the people are aroused against Brutus and his party. These are forced to flee. A battle takes place at Philippi where Antony, Octavianus, Cæsar's nephew, and Lepidus, overcome the Republicans. Brutus falls on his own sword, determined not to be taken alive. When Antony finds the lifeless body he exclaims: "This was the noblest Roman of them all!"

This play may well be divided into two parts; the first ending with the assassination of Cæsar, the second dealing with the noble minded Brutus whose theories of ideal patriotism cannot preserve him from failure in practical life. Gentle and tender as he is, he strikes down his own friend. And in the end Cæsar is victorious, — not the living Cæsar, but Cæsar dead, whose "spirit walks abroad", and avenges itself on his murderers.

### HAMLET

Claudio has murdered his brother, the King of Denmark, who is said to have died from the bite of a venomous snake; he thereupon marries the widow and usurps his brother's throne, thus hoping to exclude from succession the rightful heir, Hamlet. The latter has been thrown into a state of

melancholy by his father's death which is increased by the suspicion that Claudio has caused it. One night his father's ghost appears to him, tells him that Claudio has been his murderer, and charges him with revenge. Henceforth Hamlet has nothing else in his mind, and in order to carry out more easily his scheme of revenge he feigns madness. He sends for a company of actors to play before the court the scene of the murder as he knew it from his father's ghost. Claudio betrays himself by suddenly leaving the play on pretence of illness. Having killed Polonius, the father of his lady-love Ophelia, and the King's chief counsellor, Hamlet is sent by Claudio to England, but he discovers his step-father's plan in time, and returns to his country where he arrives at the very moment when Ophelia is buried. From grief about Hamlet's cold behaviour towards her and her father's sudden death her mind has become distraught; she has fallen into the river and has been drowned. The King thinking of another scheme in order to get rid of his stepson summons him to show his skill in fencing with Laertes, the son of Polonius, whom he orders to use a poisoned rapier. Hamlet receives a wound; in the fight they exchange weapons, and Laertes, who too is fatally wounded reveals the whole plot to Hamlet. Knowing that he must die he avenges his father's death in his last moments by turning suddenly on the King and killing him. The Queen dies likewise, having drunk unawares of the poisoned draught her husband had prepared for Hamlet.

### MACBETH

The events of the play are supposed to take place on nine days separated by intervals. Macbeth, the great and powerful Scotch thane and kinsman to Duncan, king of Scotland, has won a great battle. When returning from the field of victory with the general Banquo three witches, ghastly looking creatures, wait for them on a desolate heath addressing Macbeth with: "All hail, thou that shalt be king hereafter!" and foretelling Banquo that his children shall be kings later on. Ambition makes Macbeth susceptible to temptation. Instigated by the "weird sisters" and urged by his wife, who is just as ambitious as himself he commits foul murder on Duncan while the latter is paying a visit to his castle. Macbeth having then usurped the throne of Scotland does not enjoy his new dignity. He is continually tormented by the remembrance of the crime, and not feeling safe in his position he orders Banquo and his son to be killed. The latter, however, escapes the murderers. At a banquet which he gives to his lords the ghost of Banquo appears to him and frightens him so much that he almost betrays himself. Macbeth and his lady lead a miserable life, "things bad begun make strong themselves by ill." According to this saying of his he becomes a deliberate contriver of murder. All the time he holds desperately fast to what the witches tell him, and he consults them again. They say that he need not fear anything as long as Birnam wood does not come to Dunsinane. A revolution breaks out in his country, the people want to free themselves from the tyrant. A powerful army marches towards Dunsinane castle, and in order to hide their numbers they carry big branches before them. When a messenger tells Macbeth that Birnam wood approaches Dunsinane hill he is full of fear, he knows that his

end is near, but fights with all the animal instinct that clings to life. He is slain by Macduff, whose wife and children he had slaughtered some time before. Lady Macbeth dies before him: the planning of the crime and her share in it had unhinged her mind. She takes her own life.

### THE TEMPEST

Prospero was once Duke of Milan, but having neglected his duty towards his country for the sake of books and private interests his crown had been taken from him by his brother. He and his little daughter Miranda find a refuge in a lonely uninhabited island, where they live for twelve years. Having studied the art of magic Prospero releases a good spirit, Ariel, who has been confined in the hollow trunk of an old tree by a witch named Sychorax, and who is always ready to do Prospero's will. The very opposite to this "airy" spirit is Caliban, the son of Sychorax, an ugly monster whose character, as Hazlitt says, seems to grow out of the soil. He is the representative of the menial class, has some degree of understanding, but is without reason and moral sense. It is in vain that Prospero tries to teach him anything useful. One day Antonio and Fernando, son of the king of Naples, are shipwrecked near the island in consequence of a storm which Prospero has raised by his magic art. But by his help they and the whole crew are rescued. They come to the island where Fernando beholds with delight the beautiful Miranda who, having never seen another man but her father, takes Fernando for a spirit. They fall in love with each other. Prospero is reconciled to his brother, and his dukedom is restored to him. So he buries all his books and casts his magic wand into the sea, resolving to think in future only of the welfare of his people. And they all leave the island for Naples.

### The Decline of the Drama.

To learn of a decline in the quality of the drama after Shakespeare's work was ended can hardly be a matter of surprise to the student. Many of his survivors and successors in the art had great gifts, and various parts of their work show good or even excellent points. But the drama had reached its high-water mark with Shakespeare. With the coming of the Stuarts both the national glory and the literary life of England were like a receding tide. The great glow of the Elizabethan days was over. The *ideals of men* were fast becoming those of *parties and factions*. And last but not least, a narrow interpretation of religious duty encouraged a *spirit of hostility towards the stage*. Fewer fine men were playgoers, and thus plays were of an inferior order to suit an inferior audience. A new tendency was evident and

### Ben Jonson (1563—1637)

was its leading spirit. It was a reaction against romantic drama. Shakespeare's world of imagination with its never ending charm was to be

replaced by an intellectual school of drama based on a knowledge of classical methods. It was to be a study of the humours and manners of men. Ben Jonson, a great friend and admirer of Shakespeare's (who once took part in Jonson's plays) had a hard time in youth and began to act when he was twenty. He too remodelled old plays and by the end of his life had written a great number of comedies and masques, and two tragedies. He took Plautus as his guide for form and tried to cultivate a raw realism. Shakespeare handled human nature in its universality, moulding it with his great master hand. Ben Jonson put men on the stage with their peculiarities or oddities of manner so prominent that his characters could be labelled with the special fault that marked them, their "humours". It was very amusing to see, but a rather one-sided view. It was also intended to be instructive. The classical three unities were to be observed. Thus began the decline, and it suited the taste of the time. Ben Jonson represented the highest culture to the early Stuart period. He was indeed better than any who immediately followed him. But he preferred learning and logic to free play of fancy and impassioned feeling. So he became, with his love for classical methods, the forerunner of the Restoration Drama. His first and best comedy, Every Man in his Humour was written before Shakespeare died, and the latter took one of the parts. We see Bobadill, a miserable impostor, pompous but poor, and a thoroughgoing braggart. He is sure he is a first rate swordsman and can easily, with the help of twenty friends, hew down a whole army. But he turns out to be a coward, and in the end is well thrashed. Ben Jonson's others comedies are The Silent Woman, Volpone the Fox, and The Alchemist. His tragedy of Sejanus shows the difference between Ben Jonson and Shakespeare, for, though it informs us regarding Roman conditions it does not appeal to our hearts like Julius Cæsar. Ben Jonson was the most prominent personality of his time, the last of the full-blooded Elizabethans, and the connecting link between them and the Restoration poets. Occasional lyrics found in his plays are still great favourites more especially one that has been set to music, "Drink to me only with thine eyes". To many he is best known by his lines "To the Memory of my beloved Master, William Shakespeare". We see that his age appreciated him for on his tomb in the Poet's Corner are graven the words: O, Rare Ben Jonson!

Several other dramatists of the day reflected the tastes of this time of decline. In each some good point may be discovered but we cannot

linger over the names of Chapman, the translator of Homer, the dramatists Massinger and Ford, Webster, Beaumont and Fletcher, Dekker and others. In Beaumont we see the true romantic spirit of the Elizabethans. He worked a few years with Fletcher, and the two produced, among other things, *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*, the story of a murderous club. It is a burlesque of the pompous citizen of London, and abounds in rollicking fun, e. g., The scene of the May-Day revels. Dekker is full of "quaint conceits" in true Elizabethan style. He speaks of "that tawny-faced tobacconist Death who turns all men to ashes". And some of his lyrics are of a surpassing tenderness. Little is known of him, and his shadowy figure makes a fitting close to the age of genius whose poetic glory was fast becoming a memory.

### Elizabethan Prose. Philosophy.

Francis Bacon, Lord Verulam and Viscount of St. Albans, 1561–1626. It has been said that it would be difficult to find in the history of biography two things so sharply contrasted as Francis Bacon's political life and his intellectual career. He was well-born, and had the advantages of a good education at Cambridge and four years of foreign travel. On returning home he took up the profession of law, and rose rapidly in reputation as orator, lawyer, and philosopher. His brilliant gifts were only equalled by "his mean and servile nature". For he eagerly sought the favour of any who could advance him, but would desert such a friend or benefactor if it suited his interests. This was seen in the case of the Earl of Essex, his patron, whose downfall Bacon hastened by using his power as advocate against him. Under James I. Bacon occupied the highest office of justice in the kingdom, but was found to be guilty of bribery and corruption. For this he was disgraced and forced to spend his closing years in retirement.

In literature Bacon is known: 1. For his short but weighty Essays written in dignified English prose on a great variety of subjects: on Gardens, on Studies etc., which are still widely read; 2. for his renowned work written in Latin, the Great Institution of True Philosophy.\* This laid the foundation of a new system of philosophy, the inductive method, by which observation and experiment should lead up to theory. Till that day the reverse, the deductive method, which pro-

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\* *Instauratio Magna.*

ceeded from the general law to the particular example, had been in use. Bacon's work consisted of six books, of which the second, the New Instrument<sup>\*</sup>, is the most important. His Treatise on the Advancement of Learning and a History of Henry VII. are fine specimens of English prose. The whole weight of his learning and his vast intellectual activity were brought to bear on his works. Bacon thus gave an impetus to science and progress by which his name will be remembered long after his faults and their just punishment have been forgotten.

### Religious Prose.

During the years 1607–1611 a new Translation of the English Bible was in charge of nearly fifty divines, whose work, when completed, was known as the *Authorised Version* . . . "The general editorship . . . was placed in the hands of the most learned personage in an erudite age: Lancelot Andrewes, Bishop of Winchester. This version of the Bible represents the tongue of no historical period, but is an *artificial product, selected with exquisite care, from the sacred felicities of two centuries and a half*. Its effect upon later authorship has been constant, and is of *infinite benefit to style*. Not a native author but owes something of his melody and his charm to these Biblical accents, which were the *first fragments of purely classical English* to attract his admiration in childhood."\*\*

\* *Novum Organum*.

\*\* Quoted from Sir E. Gosse, in his *Short History of Modern English Literature*, p. 127–28.

## PERIOD IV

### THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

#### THE CIVIL WAR, AND THE RESTORATION OF THE STUARTS

The great Puritans · Milton · Bunyan · Writers of the Restoration: Dryden  
Butler · Locke etc.

#### The Character of the Age.

The seventeenth century was an age of unrest. Never has there been a time in the history of England when external conditions were so antagonistic to the harmonious development of literature. Yet out of these very circumstances arose the religious feeling that found expression in the great English epic, *Paradise Lost*. The literary atmosphere of the Elizabethan times had completely vanished, except in one particular, the survival of the lyric. This last connecting link with the Golden Age owed its existence to Ben Jonson, and while the theatres were kept closed by the Puritans, the tender lyrics of gay Cavaliers or a few religious poems were the chief poetry in existence.

Before the middle of the century *two distinct currents*, long since evident in politics, were also *evident in literature*. The religious feeling of the *Puritan party* found expression in Milton, and Bunyan. The superficial and worldly tastes of the *Royalists* who had come under French influence brought into fashion a drama of vicious tendencies. And the English stage was at this time at its worst. But at length there emerged from among the evil one good result, the founding by Dryden of a new school for literary form, — a school for correctness and precision, that was based on the French adaptation of *classical rules* for writing poetry. Whatever weak points this school showed at a later date, it had amongst its aims a *certain restraint*, and the pursuit of method.

**Lyrics.** The love of song, that glad outburst of the Elizabethan Age, outlived the drama in its best form. Even when the stage was silent, dainty love lyrics flourished, and the gay Cavaliers sang to their lady-loves with wondrous grace and charm. First among these lyric poets stands

Robert Herrick (1591–1674.) There is a melody in his verse of which no short quotation can convey an idea. His words come from the heart, and have a true Elizabethan ring, but also a true perfection of form and finish. Religious feeling often enters into his poems.

With him Thomas Carew might be named, both standing mid-way between the Elizabethans and the Augustan Age.

Two others, Sir John Suckling and Richard Lovelace, are more distinctly of the Cavalier type, full of loyalty to their king and gallantry to ladies. Suckling shows French influence, and his poems are sometimes called cameos. His Ballad upon a Wedding is celebrated.

Lovelace wrote the well-known, oft-quoted lines, To Lucasta

"I could not love thee, dear, so much,  
Loved I not honour more."

Also the lines in his poem, To Althea

"Stone walls do not a prison make.  
Nor iron bars a cage."

### **John Milton (1608 – 1674). The Puritan Epic.**

John Milton, the greatest poet of the seventeenth century was born in Bread Street, London. He went, when a youth of fifteen, to Christ's College, Cambridge, and for his delicate, feminine type of beauty was known as the "lady of Christ's". He was an ardent student of theology and classics, but found time for literary efforts. When nineteen he composed the Ode to the Nativity in which his thoughts on Christmas Day are expressed in majestic musical verse full of devout religious feeling. After nine years at college, Milton went to live in a retired country spot near Windsor, where he continued his studies in Greek and Latin. Here were written his four best shorter poems, I'Allegro, Il Penseroso, Comus, and Lycidas. A few lines in the last of these proves that Milton was now becoming a more decided Puritan. But his Puritanism was not of the kind that despised the arts and letters. In 1638 Milton left England to travel abroad, and with this ends his *first literary period*, that of *his early poems*.

In Italy Milton met many famous men and enriched his mind with a knowledge of Italian literature. About this time he had thoughts of writing a great national epic on the Arthurian legends, a plan later given up. The news of political disturbances in England decided him to return home. By a stay of fifteen months abroad he had fitted himself to

write with greater force and originality. But his country needed him, and for the next twenty years he was carried out of art and poetry into politics and prose. Thus begins his *second period*, that of controversial writing.

With the exception of a few Sonnets, Milton now wrote in prose for the cause of freedom, and pamphlets came in quick succession from his pen. The chief of these, entitled Areopagitica, was a plea for liberty of the press, and was the first of its kind. In the same year appeared his tract On Education. Cromwell, for whose personality he had a genuine admiration, made Milton Latin Secretary. And the publication of the Defence for the People of England, written in Latin spread Milton's fame over all Europe. By this he tried to prove the right of the people to put Charles I. to death. When total blindness befel him, Milton still continued to work for the Commonwealth and for freedom in the exercise of religion. After the Restoration (1660) Milton as an anti-royalist was in danger of his life. He lived in hiding, but was found, was put in prison, and eventually released. He settled near London and devoted himself to his great work, and thus begins his *third period*. Paradise Lost appeared in 1667. Its sequel, Paradise Regained, was published, together with the choral drama Samson Agonistes, in 1671. Milton died November 8, 1674 and was buried near his father, but some time after, the ashes of the great Puritan poet were laid in the Poets' Corner.

Milton was married three times. His first wife came of a Cavalier family and was ill suited to a Puritan home. There was much unhappiness on both sides, till at length a reconciliation was effected. The second, a happy marriage, ended in two years with the death of his wife. A third wife took kind care of the blind poet in his last years, and outlived him.

Milton's three literary periods. It has been said that had Milton written only the poems of his first period, he would yet be in the first rank of English poets. The Ode on the Nativity is in Milton's grand manner of writing, a style simple and sublime. We feel the "solemn stillness" of the first Christmas Day which ushers in a new era of light for the whole world. The poem is a fitting forerunner of Paradise Lost.

Of a very different order is the masque, Comus, which points to Italian influence. Like other masques it is a fanciful poem of a semi-dramatic kind, written as a compliment to a great nobleman. Members of the family took part in the performance, according to the fashion of the day.

L'Allegro and Il Penseroso are two poems that must be considered together. The opening lines in both show that each is a counterpart of the other, a glimpse of country life seen in two different moods. In L'Allegro the cheerful onlooker banishes Melancholy and invokes Mirth. A spirit of gladness fills the whole, and the metre is full of merry movement.

"Come and trip it as you go,  
On the light fantastic toe!"

In Il Penseroso the pensive mood banishes "vain deluding joys" and invokes "divinest Melancholy". We feel "a calm peace and quiet" and wander through the "cloisters pale" to the "dim religious light" of the sacred edifice. The closing lines read like a prophecy of Milton's last years of "weary age". The moods are those of a scholar, for classic figures, nymphs and gods, mingle with the rural scenes. This artificial element was a mannerism of the time, and was due to Italian influence. Yet Milton by his artistic touch weaves all into a harmonious whole and presents us with a most lovable picture of English country life.

The classic element is very evident in Lycidas, in which Milton mourns his dead college friend who, had he lived, would have been a clergyman. The poet makes use of this opportunity to attack "false shepherds", i. e. the corrupt clergy of his time. Again Greek figures mingle with Christian apostles. But the melody of the verse, in spite of the very irregular metre, bears us along on its poetic current and brings with it many a grand thought, such as the lines that show the loftiness of Milton's ideals.

Fame is no plant that grows on mortal soil,  
Nor in the glistening foil  
Set off to the world, nor in broad rumour lies,  
But lives and spreads aloft by those pure eyes  
And perfect witness of all-judging Jove:  
As he pronounces lastly on each deed,  
"Of so much fame in heaven expect thy meed".

The allegorical and pastoral elements in the three poems point back to the time of Sidney and Spenser. On the other hand the *close observation of nature* (as shown in L'Allegro and Il Penseroso), although conveyed to us through the "beautiful haze" of a scholar's mind, points to the future Return to Nature. Thus in Milton we see the past and present meet.

To Milton's second period belong his Sonnets in which he adheres closely to the Italian sonnet form. The subjects are very varied. One treats of the Massacre of the Piedmontese in the Vaudois valleys, and the trumpet ring of the first line is like a battle cry.

"Avenge, O Lord, Thy slaughtered saints!"

Another is on Cromwell. In his best-known sonnet On my Blindness, a sublime resignation shines forth in the classic line,

"They also serve who only stand and wait".

Milton's prose is for the most part of a passing interest. He does not escape the faults of his age, the violent invectives verging on coarseness. But when at its best, the language is grand and even picturesque. Yet he indulges in long and involved sentences, which baffle the ordinary reader and are not a model of English prose.

In the third period Milton's genius reaches its high-water mark in his masterpiece *Paradise Lost*. This poem consists of twelve books and is unique in its choice of subject and plan of the whole. Milton has treated the Bible story of the Fall of Man with a remarkable power of invention and a luxuriance of imagination which inspires us with awe. Personages, natural and supernatural, are brought before us with a vividness only possible to a consummate artist. The imposing figure of Satan, the fallen Angel, is at first the chief object of interest. Yet it seems hardly just to say, that Milton makes of him a hero. Only the fiend who cries out "Evil, be thou my good!" could have planned the tempting of innocent human beings. Man is the chief object of interest, although his part appears at first to be subordinate. But for him the scheme of salvation is planned, that *in the end he may be the conqueror over sin and death*. Digressions and long monologues are said to impair the epic character of the whole. Yet no English poem approaches this one in its *grand treatment of the great struggle between Good and Evil*.

*Paradise Regained*, the natural sequel to the above, begins with the temptation of Christ in the wilderness, but ends without touching on the final act of Atonement. It is lacking in action, yet contains many passages of great beauty, and is marked by the grand and elevated tone of its forerunner.

*Samson Agonistes* is the tragic story of the blind giant who kills his enemies in his own death. Milton was thinking of the Puritan cause and its apparent defeat, yet hoping that death might bring victory in the end. The involved and elliptic language presents great difficulties to the ordinary reader.

Milton's favourite metre is the blank verse best seen in *Paradise Lost*. Occasional ellipses cause some obscurity. But the mighty march of his lines with their solemn resonant quality justifies the name given to him by a later English poet (Tennyson) — that of "the God-gifted organ voice of England".

## ANALYSIS OF PARADISE LOST

From the opening lines of the poem we learn that the song is to be

"Of man's first disobedience and the fruit  
Of that forbidden tree whose mortal taste  
Brought death into the world, and all our woe  
With loss of Eden".

And the poet implores for inspiration that he "may assert Eternal Providence and justify the ways of God to man". Satan, an angel, revolts from God, who dwells in the Empyrean or Heaven, the upper of the two hemispheres of primeval Infinity. He and his crew are expelled from Heaven by the Messiah, the Son of God. When they come to the gate of Heaven they see before them the second hemisphere Chaos, a great abyss, into which they fling themselves. For "nine times the space that measures day and night" they fall till they reach Hell, the lake of fire prepared for them. Here they lie for another nine days. In the meantime God the Father, to repair the loss caused to Heaven, creates man and the place he is to live in: the world or Starry Universe which shall hang drop-like into Chaos suspended from Heaven at the north-pole. When Satan discovers the new creation, he conceives the plan of avenging himself on the Almighty by trying to pollute this new world and its inhabitants, in order to drag them down to Hell itself. The Almighty has seen Satan's flight to Paradise with evil intent, and sends the Archangel Raphael to warn Adam, the first of the new race. But Satan, with diabolical cunning, takes the shape of a serpent and tempts Eve to eat the fruit of the forbidden tree. She in her turn tempts Adam, and the guilty pair, for their disobedience, are driven from Paradise by the Archangel Michael, who however reveals to them the hope of salvation by the coming of a Saviour.

## John Bunyan (1628 – 1688). The Puritan Allegory.

The Puritan feeling of this time found expression not alone in Milton the scholar and poet. A simple brazier or tinker, the unlearned John Bunyan, wrote an allegory that went straight to the hearts of the people, and has maintained its place there, *The Pilgrim's Progress*. It was the work of twelve years, spent in prison, to which place Bunyan was condemned for preaching his religious views. It is both a religious story and a religious allegory, told in the vocabulary of the common labourer, but borrowing much of the language of the Bible, with which all Puritans were familiar.

The story is of one, Christian, a dweller in the City of Destruction (sin), who journeys towards the Celestial City (holiness) with a great burden on his back. We accompany him through all his experiences, and his enemies are our enemies. Names of abstractions are given to places and people with an allegorical meaning, but to us they are absolutely

real. We know the Slough of Despond, the Palace Beautiful, and Vanity Fair. We meet Giant Despair, Apollyon the incarnation of Evil, and the friends Faithful and Pliable. It is told as a dream, and like many dreams is not always consistent. But it is so human in its interest that it has entered into the religious conceptions of the English people from childhood to old age. The simplest folk love it, and the most lettered quote from it with undisguised admiration. Macaulay the critic commends it as "an invaluable study for those who wish to command the English tongue". So simple is the language that many pages contain few words of more than two syllables.

Bunyan was born *a master of his style*, and his Pilgrim's Progress ranks as *one of the first of the world's allegories*. Bunyan's Holy War is of the same nature, while Grace Abounding tells in autobiographical form of his strivings after godliness. But these have not the literary merit of the Pilgrim's Progress.

### John Dryden (1631 – 1700). The Restoration Drama.

John Dryden was the most prominent and most prolific writer of the Restoration period. He was well-born, naturally gifted, and had a good school education at Westminster. His first verses were on the death of Cromwell, the "Lord Protector" (died 1658) whom he praised. But he soon after welcomed King Charles II. by the poem Astrea Redux. Dryden was a very industrious author; he wrote twenty-seven dramas and several long poems. One of his most valuable works appeared the year he was made Poet Laureate (1678), his Essay on Dramatic Poesy. In this occurs the well-known criticism on Shakespeare.

Many of Dryden's poems were in support of some party, political or religious. Absalom and Achitophel (1681) was one of the earliest of this kind. The Old Testament names disguised persons who were intriguing against the King's brother, afterwards James II. The following year appeared a poem, the Religio Laici, or A Layman's Faith, a defence of the Established Church against the many sects that had arisen, known as Dissenters. In the next reign, that of a Roman Catholic King, Dryden directed a satire against the Established Church and in favour of Roman Catholicism, entitled The Hind and the Panther (1687). In this poem the *Hind*, white and spotless, stood for the *Roman religion*, and the *spotted panther* was the *English Church*.

When William and Mary became rulers of England, Dryden lost his Laureateship, the new sovereigns being Protestants. He then began a translation of Virgil's *Aeneid*, and, this finished, he adapted and modernized a number of stories taken from Chaucer, and imitated from Boccaccio. At the same time appeared his celebrated *Ode on St. Cecilia's Day* or *Alexander's Feast*. In this beautiful and popular poem Dryden sings the power of music over the human mind.

Dryden's dramas written in *rhymed verse* are more or less tainted with the bad taste and vulgarity common to the Restoration Drama and traceable to the French influence of that day. He is at his best when dealing with a quarrel scene. In the tragedy "All for Love" Dryden returned to blank verse. When Antony and his general Ventidius quarrel we are reminded of Shakespeare's *Julius Cæsar* where Brutus and Cassius have high words with each other.

Dryden's chief merit consists in his *criticisms*, given in clear, vigorous prose. In his *Essay on Dramatic Poesy* he *advocates the use of rhymes in tragedy, as opposed to blank verse*. He is our first English critic. In his short lyrics he is a true singer of songs, like many of his time, and his verse is a model of form. Above all he revived the use of the *heroic couplet*.

Few writers have been so many-sided and have produced such an abundance of work. But all he wrote pointed to the coming change, — that of *aiming at polish, perfection of form, rather than warmth and depth of feeling*. On account of his scholarship, his wit, and his imposing personality, Dryden was *the literary leviathan of his day, and exercised a great influence on his generation*. He died in 1704 and was buried in the corner sacred to Poets in Westminster Abbey.

### Restoration Poetry.

Preceding Dryden in regard to age, but inferior to him in literary merit is the poet of the Royalists,

### Samuel Butler (1612 – 1680).

This Cavalier poet of the Restoration is best known by his burlesque poem *Hudibras*, which was written to satirize the weaknesses of the Puritans, their intolerance, and above all their abhorrence of all manner of amusements. *Hudibras* is a Puritan magistrate who tries to suppress merry-making and sports by harsh measures. But on one occasion he is overwhelmed by those whom he has attacked, and is put into the

village stocks, an object of ridicule for all passers by. Similar incidents and laughter-provoking scenes make up the poem which, considered as a work of art, is not a united whole. But its short lines and fantastic rhymes make it easy to remember. As it contained several allusions, witty and satirical, to prominent figures in the Civil War, it was the most popular poem of the day, especially at Court. The flippant king, Charles II., carried a copy about with him and was loud in his praises of the author. Yet Butler died in poverty and neglect, and was buried at the expense of a friend.

#### THE PROSE OF THE RESTORATION

takes forms that cannot be overlooked, for from these little streams came mighty rivers.

Theology found expression in Sermons, written in Biblical language largely due to the Authorized Translation of the Bible (Pulpit English).

History too had its beginning in Clarendon's *Great Rebellion* (of the Puritans), a one-sided work written in a prose that was in advance of that time.

Isaak Walton (1593–1683) expressed his great *love of quiet English scenery* in a sedate prose full of a quaint charm "like a ripple upon the sunny surface of a stream". His *Complete Angler* is unique. He describes not only inanimate nature but also the little birds with a tenderness we see later in Burns.

The writing of Diaries, a daily record of ordinary events, now takes a pronounced form.

John Evelyn, *another lover of nature*, tells us of that age, its good and bad sides, and gives us the most valuable description of the Fire of London 1666.

Samuel Pepys gives in his Diary minute descriptions of the time, of the stage, and its actors, which are of great use to us. Above all he has helped to preserve traditions of the way in which Shakespeare's plays were then acted, and has set to music the intonation of Betterton the actor in "To be or not to be". He hoped thus to perpetuate the manner in which Shakespeare himself had directed the recitation of this celebrated passage.

Many of these forms of prose underwent a great development in the next century.

The year 1688 brought with it more than political progress. Science and philosophy made rapid strides, for in the first, Isaac Newton discovered the law of gravitation, whereas philosophy made a fresh start in the teachings of

**John Locke (1632 – 1704).**

He received a good education at school and college, and, when a young man realized the advantages of Bacon's theories. His life was at first full of changes, but after the Revolution it became more settled, and he began to make for himself a name as philosopher. His fame is based chiefly on his Essays, of which the greatest is the Essay concerning Human Understanding. Following Bacon's method, he traced all knowledge to experience. The work was the result of all the studies and researches of his life and was published when he was fifty-eight years of age. It is looked upon as a landmark in the history of English philosophy. In an Essay on Education written three years later, Locke advanced theories new to his time on the teaching and training of children. His language is clear and plain almost to baldness, but it has the merit of bringing a difficult subject down to the level of the average intelligence. With him we pass on to the next century, the Age of Anne.

## PERIOD V

### THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

First half: The Age of Anne . The School of Pope . The Rise of the Periodicals . The Novel. — Second half: The Return to Nature . The Forerunners of the Romantic Movement . Burns. Drama: Goldsmith, Sheridan.

#### THE AGE OF ANNE

The first half of this century, the Age of Anne, as it is named, might be also called The Age of Reason, of Common Sense. Intellect was supreme; the spirit of criticism was uppermost, and it required of literature a cold, outward perfection of form, a mechanical excellence, as opposed to emotional expression, imagination and enthusiasm. Poetry took the form of *critical, narrative, didactic, or occasional*, verse. This was beneficial in that it checked extravagance and introduced a tone of restraint and respectability, which was doubtless somewhat shallow, but yet a great improvement on the very lax standards of the Restoration period. This cultivation of form spread to the writing of prose which became the most prominent feature of the time. It took the form of satires, essays and above all of *journalism* and *novel-writing*. This century brought forth the daily paper, the periodicals, and the novel, sentimental or humorous. Poets cared no more for the country. London was the centre of literary life. Among a group of men of brilliant gifts stands first and foremost

**Alexander Pope (1688 – 1744),**  
Poet and Essayist.

The change in literary style introduced by Dryden was brought to perfection in the first half of the eighteenth century by a group of writers of whom Pope was the leading genius. As a boy Alexander Pope had an irregular education due to ill-health and a physical de-

formity. His mother's tender care and his precocious intelligence overcame many obstacles and he began early to attempt verse-making. To use his own words he "lisped in numbers and the numbers came". In the last year that Dryden presided over the literary group at Will's Coffee House, there appeared one evening, in company of a member, a boy of twelve years whose childish admiration of the veteran poet was unbounded. Young Alexander Pope was the one among all present who was destined to surpass the master.

Three years later his first literary attempts began to appear. But in 1711 a poem entitled *Essay on Criticism* brought him both reputation and popularity. The following year the "tiny mock-heroic poem" *The Rape of the Lock* was first sketched, to become later a dwarf epic in five books, a masterpiece of its kind that made Pope the *first poet of the age*. It was based on an incident in real life. A young Lord Petre had cut off a lock of hair from the head of the beautiful Miss Fermor. A quarrel ensued between the families of both parties. In the poem the lock is borne upward and becomes a star, and a reconciliation follows. Pope's ingenious little work restored good-will. The smooth heroic couplet used together with the literary skill displayed gave the author a place in literary circles, and society people began to take notice of one who could so daintily flatter them. A few years later followed Pope's *Translation of Homer* into rhyme. A scholarly critic pointed out that it was a very pretty poem, but not Homer. On the other hand it is of interest to us as the most perfect specimen of the heroic couplet, and of early eighteenth century poetical elegance *as it was then understood*. Samuel Johnson maintained fifty years later that Pope's Homer was without rival in its way. This illustrates well the difference between the eighteenth and nineteenth century taste in literary style.

Pope made many enemies by his vanity and bitter comments. He edited Shakespeare so badly as to provoke much criticism. In answer to these and other attacks Pope wrote his most biting satire, *The Dunciad*, a poem of bad taste and spite, but good verse as regards form. It pictures the throne of dullness as being vacant, and the candidate proposed by the author is first one, then another of his enemies. The last work of Pope's of any importance is his best didactic poem in heroic couplets, *The Essay on Man*, divided into four parts or epistles. It contains much knowledge by no means new, mingled with moral instructions expressed in polished verse of melodious sweetness. The

high moral aim and the neatly turned lines have furnished many popular quotations, for example:

"Know then thyself, presume not God to scan;  
The proper study of mankind is man."

Pope's prose is quite characteristic of him, witty, and to the point, but with a sneer running throughout. This is seen in his essay: *On Epic Poetry*, and his *Receipt for Making an Epic Poem*. He outlived most of his friends and died a lonely man in 1744. He will always be known as a master in the handling of the heroic couplet.

#### JOHN GAY (1685–1732)

The year 1712 was the beginning of a time of great productiveness. No work of genius appeared but men of talent wrote freely, and a certain brilliance marked the literary atmosphere. To this time belongs John Gay, a skilful and fairly independent satellite of Pope. His works consist of short songs, fables still popular to-day, and a longer work, *The Beggar's Opera*.

#### Jonathan Swift (1667 – 1745).

The writer next in importance, the friend of Pope, his equal in gifts — but these of a different order — is Jonathan Swift. His parents were English, but Swift was born in Dublin and educated there. Poverty greeted him at his birth and ill-health dogged his steps all his life. He was forced to be dependent on a distant relative, Sir William Temple, the Whig diplomatist. Nothing seemed lacking to humiliate this proud, gifted, ambitious young man who went through life in a spirit of bitter defiance only to feel himself worsted in the end. When twenty-seven Swift decided to take orders in the Irish Church, and after Sir William Temple's death he accepted three poor livings in Ireland. But from time to time he visited England in order to keep in touch with the Whig party who welcomed this brilliant talker and pamphleteer and promised to advance him. But this they failed to do, and Swift parted from them in disgust and anger.

Meanwhile he had written his two bitter satires, *The Battle of the Books* and *The Tale of a Tub*. The first depicts a conflict between the ancient and modern schools of learning, each claiming superiority. But the author indulges in undignified abuse based on insufficient scholarship. The *Tale of a Tub* shows Swift at his worst. He attacks, in the form of an allegory, the Roman, Lutheran, and Calvinist creeds, hoping by this to be advanced to a bishopric in the Church of England. But this was refused him, for his language had

given offence to those whom he hoped to please. He was however made Dean of St. Patrick's, Dublin. In Ireland Swift became popular by writing against the English Ministry, above all by letters signed "M. B. Drapier". The rest of his life was associated with political party warfare that called forth pamphlets from this embittered man who wielded a pen like a two-edged sword.

Swift had friends as well as enemies. With Pope together he wrote the "Miscellanies", prose articles that were unkindly criticized. Two women friends played a part in his life, both named Esther. These he called respectively, "Stella", and "Vanessa". To the first he wrote regularly, a correspondence which shows the better side of his nature. The "Journal to Stella", originally not intended for print, the most charming and most unique of his works, gives us an insight into the life of that day. But the work by which Swift is best known is, *The Travels of Lemuel Gulliver*. This, intended as a satire on conditions of that time has, as a story, become famous in European literature. After Swift had finished this, his longest book, he suffered a severe shock in the death of Stella, to whom he was deeply attached. His health was shattered; great depression affected his mind, and insanity set in some years before Swift died in 1745.

### GULLIVER'S TRAVELS

*Gulliver's Travels* is an extravagant story told with great gravity, and with most remarkable consistency in regard to the details. The manner in which the narration proceeds is so convincing that many received it at first as a true tale. Gulliver is a ship's surgeon who describes in four books four impossible countries. The first is that of *Lilliput* where miniature beings live in tiny houses and surroundings, and have customs and feelings all admirably adapted to each of their tiny wants. The second country, named *Brobdinag* is the reverse. Everything there is on a gigantic scale, and Gulliver feels as if he were a midget. The third, the country of *Laputa* is a fantastically imagined flying island where poor mindless creatures have immortal bodies. In the fourth among the *Houyhnhnms* horses are made to appear far superior in mind to men who sink to a most degraded condition.

In the first two parts Swift satirizes the court of the reigning King, George I. In the third the satire is directed against learning, and in the last it becomes more general, but also more bitter, even to ferocity. It has been remarked that Swift never joins in the laugh that he calls forth. He maintains a grim seriousness.

The practice of writing for a political party who was willing to pay well, came to be the occupation of many a ready writer who was not

possessed of a very tender conscience. A man of this class on whose character very varying judgments have been passed, was

### Daniel Defoe (1661 – 1731)

who is best known as the author of *Robinson Crusoe*, the most popular story of adventure ever written. While in business as a merchant he interested himself in many *social* affairs, issuing essays on various subjects in plain language. But his character was not as straightforward as his style of writing. Living in an age of political intrigue, he was frequently paid as a pamphleteer by one party or another. But he was little liked and decided finally to withdraw from politics. When living in retirement, and nearly sixty years of age, Defoe made use of a story told him of a sailor cast on a desert island. The result was

#### ROBINSON CRUSOE

A succession of incidents that happen to this lonely man on his desert island are so artlessly strung together and told to us by Crusoe himself that we are inclined to accept the tale as true. The author effaces himself entirely. We follow the fate of the castaway and share his feelings, and we see him work himself up step by step to a more civilized condition. Defoe did not from the beginning construct a plot, but the story becomes by its very simplicity the epitome of what the emigrant of a civilized race has attempted in primitive conditions, and has attained in the colonies. The interest abates when Crusoe leaves the island. The first part of the book is greatly superior to the rest. There is an absence of sentiment and "tearful emotion", for which reason Defoe's work cannot be said to be the forerunner of Richardson's novel. Defoe and Swift have written two tales of adventure that have taken hold of all civilized countries and still fascinate young and old. But Defoe refrains entirely from satire. The effect of *Robinson Crusoe* on German literature, and the numerous imitations it called forth are well known.

Defoe wrote several other novels that are steps towards the evolution of the realistic novel of later date: *Moll Flanders*, *Roscana*, *Captain Singleton*. The *Apparition of Mrs. Veal*, a short but most convincing tale, was greatly admired by Sir Walter Scott for the dexterity with which the story is told.

#### THE RISE OF JOURNALISM

The weekly periodical, the forerunner of the moralizing novel.

#### Richard Steele (1672 – 1729). Joseph Addison (1672 – 1719).

The friendship of Addison and Steele began with their school days, and was, on the part of the warm-hearted impulsive Steele, affection mingled with veneration for his quiet reserved friend Addison. Steele

who had tried his hand at pamphlets, poems and plays with little success, obtained an office under government which gave him the best opportunity for obtaining foreign and domestic news. Steele seized this chance of founding a paper of a kind much needed, a *periodical that would help to correct the faults of the age*, and the frivolity of society, in a manner so pleasing that society would be amused rather than offended. The result was the appearance of *The Tatler* three times a week, price one penny, beginning April 12, 1709. Each number contained items of news, advertisements, an essay dealing with a topic of interest, or a story. It was taken at all coffee-houses and met with an eager reception. The paper had a changing career. It ceased and reappeared in 1712 as *The Spectator*, a daily paper. After two more changes of name Addison, working together with Steele, reissued the *Spectator* in 1714 and made it famous. Steele was unable to keep his friends. He became estranged from Swift who had been one of his most valued contributors, and to a great extent also from Addison. But their names will remain linked together as the founders of the moralizing periodical and the essay as a feature in literature.

Joseph Addison began life under favourable circumstances. His father, a clergyman, gave his son a good school and college education. A pension from government enabled Addison to travel, and, as a grateful return, Addison wrote a poem "The Campaign" in honour of the Duke of Marlborough's victory of Blenheim. In 1713 a tragedy by Addison, "Cato" proved very popular. It was adapted to the taste of that time by its pompous, declamatory style, and political allusions, but has since been forgotten. Addison's dealings with political parties show him as a perfectly honourable man. He was not happy in his short married life with Lady Warwick. On his death in 1719 Addison was buried with honours in the Poets' Corner. Addison's name is at the head of that movement of the eighteenth century that has had the most lasting beneficial results, not only in literature but in practical life: the *forming of a good prose style*. With Addison begins the cultivation of a *careful, finished style* of pleasant narration. He tells us that he wishes, not so much to advance new ideas, as to "give things that are known an agreeable turn". His style is easy, high-bred and courteous, and his expression is always refined. Addison has been spoken of as superficial. But he wrote for a superficial public and "sought", so he says "to enliven morality with wit and to bring philosophy to dwell at tea-tables and coffee-houses".

As a parable the Vision of Mirza is conspicuous. But for all Englishmen the essays on

**SIR ROGER DE COVERLEY**

represent Addison in his best manner.

It was Steele who created an imaginary club of all sections of Society, the Spectator Club. Here we first meet Sir Roger de Coverley, the best type of a country gentleman, of great simplicity of manner, and with a high sense of honour. When Addison as "Spectator" takes us to visit Sir Roger in his country home, we see him in his patriarchal relation to his tenants, happy, innocent mediocrity on his own local pedestal, joyfully welcomed after his absence by his servants, tenderly caring for his old horse and house-dog. He has a good chaplain who will not "insult Sir Roger with Latin and Greek at his own table", but who understands back-gammon. On Sunday Sir Roger goes to Church and allows no one to sleep there but himself. He is present at the Assizes and makes a speech which, though pointless, is received with respect. When in London he thinks of the poor at home and their wants at Christmas-time, providing for all and each, and arranging the games and festivities. And when the Spectator Club receives a letter from Sir Roger's butler who writes of his master's death, "upon the reading of it there was not a dry eye in the club".

It has been justly observed that "the immortality of the Spectator is due to Sir Roger de Coverley!"

The tendency to moralize in the periodicals led on by a natural step to the moralizing novel.

**Samuel Richardson (1689 – 1761).**

The sentimental novel.

The name of Samuel Richardson stands for the new direction of fiction, the *rise of the sentimental novel*. Richardson was a printer by trade who had industriously employed his leisure in writing love letters for country girls. At the age of fifty he undertook, at the request of a bookseller, to produce a hand-book of correspondence for the un-educated. The letters contained a story with a moral. A young person who goes into service tells of her trying position and her many difficulties. But she triumphs over these and ends with a happy marriage. Her name was Pamela. Thus arose Richardson's first novel *Pamela*. It was exceedingly popular with the class who knew the circumstances described. They had not the shrewdness to see that Pamela gained her end as much by her capacity for scheming as by her principles. The book shows a *great insight into the human heart*, but the story proceeds slowly owing to the minute observations in the letters which are often tedious. Richardson's greatest novel is, "Clarissa Harlowe",

a story full of tragic elements and intense pathos. The heroine is the victim of a scoundrel, and she dies from ill treatment. The last novel of Richardson, *Sir Charles Grandison* is inferior to the other two. It was more popular in France than in England. His books exercised a great influence on German writing. In England his success was largely due to the newness of his style. Richardson, who was the first to write the novel of sentiment, enjoyed the greatest popularity in his life time with both the upper and middle classes. A well-known lady of fashion said of Richardson, "he had no idea of the manners of high life ... I heartily despise him, yet eagerly read him, and even sob over his works".

The exiled Emperor Napoleon I. was deeply impressed by Richardson's *Clarissa Harlowe*.

### **Henry Fielding (1707 – 1754).**

The realistic novel.

Fielding came of a family of position and means. But his extravagant habits forced him to work. He began as a journalist and writer of humorous articles. He disapproved of the excessive sentimentality of Richardson's style. And, in order to make *Pamela* appear ridiculous, Fielding followed two years later with his first novel, *Joseph Andrews*. Apart from the spirit of caricature, this story has a *humour of its own*, and one character of real interest. The next novel, *Tom Jones* is by far Fielding's best work. It is evident that the author is a *realist*. He draws a very human hero with strong, broad strokes. Fielding is often coarse, but by his *humour and truthfulness* he secures the sympathy of his readers. *Tom Jones* has been called the best novel of the eighteenth century. Fielding wrote his third novel, *Amelia*, in memory of his wife who died early. It is not equal to his other novels, and is lacking in humour and charm. Fielding, with all his faults set up a standard of robust, healthy views of life. Prose-writing in his masculine grasp gained in sturdiness and strength although it lost much of Addison's delicacy and refinement. His realism was welcome to many after the sentimental novel of Richardson, for Fielding's work is pervaded by a cheerful, sunshiny, breezy atmosphere.

### **Tobias Smollett (1721 – 1777).**

Humourist and cynic.

Smollett was a man badly treated by fortune. He led a rough life of constant change in Europe and the West Indies, and returned after

countless adventures, to London at the age of twenty seven. Here he published Roderick Random, a so-called novel in which his own experiences play a great part. A second followed, Peregrine Pickle. After this his short articles got him into great trouble. His health became very poor and forced him to go abroad. In Italy, just before his death, he published his last and best novel, Humphrey Clinker. All his works show the effect of his irregular life. There is a lack of arrangement and construction of the story. Smollett has an acute observation which sometimes shows in the word-painting of ugly scenes with too great realism. Humphrey Clinker was a novel that afforded Macaulay infinite amusement, owing to its unfailing humour. The country squire appears here, chiefly to create a laugh by his search after health, a contrast to the simple but loveable Sir Roger. The story is told in letters and shows more depth of feeling than is seen in Smollett's earlier work.

Smollett had also considerable poetic feeling which he proves by his patriotic poem, *The Tears of Scotland*.

### Laurence Sterne (1713 – 1768).

Sterne was a brilliant but irregular genius who became a clergyman by profession, but was unfitted for such a calling. His first book startled and amused the reading public by its eccentricity, *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gent.* A journey undertaken by the author for his health resulted in his best known work, the *Sentimental Journey* through France and Italy, so called because the interest depends on the *sentiment*, not on the *adventures* of the hero. His two works represent the man and the main causes of his great popularity. The stories are irregular, and independent of any acknowledged form. A jerky style, frequent digressions, and a disregard for grammar mark Sterne's works. But he delighted in having unexpected developments in store for the reader, which made his *Tristram Shandy* a great favourite. The character of *Uncle Toby* is drawn with a fine touch. The *Sentimental Journey* has a picturesque charm, and a certain tenderness. But the humour and pathos are sometimes outweighed by Sterne's *cultivated sentimentality* which made him more popular in France than in England.

### Samuel Johnson (1709 – 1784).

Samuel Johnson "the most massive figure of a man of letters" occupied a peculiar position in the literature of his day. He began life with long years of the discipline of poverty, eight of which he spent writing his *Dictionary of the English Language*. He says in the Preface that it was done "with little assistance of the learned and without any patronage of the great; amidst inconvenience and distraction, in sickness and in sorrow". This kind of preface was wholly new to that time! The dictionary is still useful as a storehouse of quotations and references to authors, but has been superseded by our modern philological works. Four years later when Johnson's mother died, he wrote in haste, to pay the expenses of the funeral, a tale, *The Prince of Abyssinia, or, Rasselas*. It contains sound opinions and clever dialogues and was popular in its time, but ranks to-day as a minor classic. Johnson also edited a periodical, the *Rambler*, and published the *Lives of the Poets*, a work in four volumes.

In the last twenty years of his life Johnson enjoyed a pension and formed a celebrated *Literary Club* of which he was the leader in a most magisterial manner. With his well known figure, his scarred face, his rolling gait, and his habit of puffing and panting out criticisms and contradictions, he was yet gladly welcomed; for his great heart overflowed with human kindness to any who needed his help. He had a unique position as a literary dictator, by his good taste and sound judgment in an age of transition. And he was the last of his kind. Boswell, Johnson's biographer, has made himself a name in literature for his careful record of his master's doings and sayings.

### SAMUEL JOHNSON ON SHAKESPEARE

As early in the century as 1709 Nicholas Rowe issued a biography of Shakespeare and an edition of his works. We have seen that Pope's edition was a failure. After the middle of the eighteenth century Johnson wrote in the *Rambler* on Shakespeare, and in 1765 another edition of the great poet's works appeared. The classical tastes of Johnson make his remarks on Shakespeare appear to us rather naïf than otherwise. He alternates between a glowing admiration of Shakespeare and a pedantic blame, of "his faults", these referring chiefly to Shakespeare's disregard of the three Unities. But Johnson honestly essayed to present Shakespeare as he saw him with his original, powerful mind. David Garrick (1717–1779), the actor, put several of Shakespeare's plays on the stage. In spite of alterations, this, like Johnson's work, was a step towards the true revival of Shakespeare.

**Oliver Goldsmith (1728 – 1774).**

Goldsmith was born in Ireland and educated in Dublin, taking a degree at Trinity College in 1749. He possessed in no ordinary measure an irresolute, versatile mind that seemed unable to settle down to a profession or to use to his own advantage his many brilliant gifts. For ten years before he produced any original work Goldsmith wandered aimlessly on the Continent, returning to England to try a variety of occupations in turn at none of which he kept for long. Proof-reading, writing magazine articles, doctoring, teaching in a school, — all were tried, given up, and tried again. The only thing that consistently marked Goldsmith's career always, throughout his life were his debts. At length Dr. Johnson, the great literary dictator, took up Goldsmith and helped him to work and gain popular favour. In 1764 *The Traveller*, a poem in heroic couplet which followed sundry short essays, proved Goldsmith to be a true poet. It was well received. The author began to appear in literary circles and was led into extravagant habits and debts. *The Vicar of Wakefield*, a story of village life, followed in 1766. Two years later Goldsmith appeared as a comic dramatist with the play, *The Good-natured Man*. In 1770 the *Deserted Village*, a poem, made a companion work to, *The Traveller*. In 1773 appeared Goldsmith's masterpiece, one of the finest comedies of the day, *She Stoops to Conquer*. Goldsmith wrote for financial reasons four Histories, of little value as such, but in a prose remarkable for its grace and ease. In 1774 he died, leaving heavy debts; but his personal friends and the literary world deeply mourned his loss, and were loud in their praise of this remarkable genius.

In *The Vicar of Wakefield* we are taken to the home of a poor country parson. He and his family feel themselves "passing rich" on £40 a year." The beautiful daughter of the Vicar captivates the squire who persuades her to elope with him. The kind-hearted father with "wise blindness" receives his daughter, who returns repentant, and clasps her to his heart. In spite of the most pathetic situations the story ends happily.

Goldsmith's characters are drawn as carefully as those of a Dutch painting. His style has a simplicity and charm which many later writers have tried in vain to imitate. Mrs. Gaskell, in her village story of Cranford, has been one of the most successful. (Nineteenth century.)

*She Stoops to Conquer* is one of the two best comedies of the eighteenth century. It is still received with delight at the present day. The scene is laid in the country, at the house of an English squire of that time.

His stepson, Tony Lumpkin is a clumsy and boorish youth, but shrewd enough to evade the marriage his mother has planned for him. He deceives his stepfather's guests, and plays practical jokes on his mother, by which at last he helps another man to marry the pretty cousin intended for him. She, by stooping to act the part of a maid-servant, conquered a wealthy lover. A spirit of the most uproarious fun pervades the play from beginning to end.

### James Thomson (1700 – 1748).

James Thomson, a Scotchman who lived in London, is best known by his poem in four parts, *The Seasons*. The subject of Pope's polished verse was Man. Thomson in turning back to Nature for his subject, also returned to blank verse. Each of the four parts of his work was in praise of one season, beginning with Winter, and each in turn records the varying moods of nature, her smiles and frowns, in such a changing climate as that of England.

Thomson's second poem *The Castle of Indolence* is written in the Spenserian stanza. It is an imitation of *The Faery Queene* more especially in the description of the Land of Drowsihead. Here the allegory has a very Spenserian note, and also a delicate humour. The valiant Knight who rescues the prisoners of Indolence is the virtue – Industry! This author also wrote a play now forgotten; in it we find the famous national song "Rule Britannia".

Thomson who died just before the second half of the century strikes the first note of the return to nature which was to become the chief characteristic of the poetry of the coming age.

### Thomas Gray (1716 – 1761).

Thomas Gray who is known to every English schoolboy as the author of *The Elegy in a Country Churchyard* had a boyhood saddened by family discord owing to a violent and cruel father. His mother sent her son to school at Eton, later to Cambridge and afterwards to travel abroad. Gray ultimately returned to Cambridge where he obtained the Regius Professorship of History. He was a solitary man, of sombre mind, little understood by most men, of whom Johnson was one. But Gray amassed a vast amount of varied learning and was deep in classics, in Italian, and Scandinavian lore. Of the last named, his poems, *The Bard*, and the *Descent of Odin* bear witness.

Not very far from Eton is the country churchyard of Stoke Pogis where Gray found the inspiration that expressed itself in his *Elegy*, "the most characteristic single poem of the eighteenth century". In

delicately polished verse of "peaceful, mature rhythm" the poet compares the course of a day and the course of life. There is a finely chiselled form of expression which shows the classic scholar, combined with a love of nature, tender but reserved, which points to the new feeling in poetry. Thus Gray stands where two roads meet, the receding classic, and the future romantic school.

### THE RETURN TO NATURE

The mere fact that a revival of Shakespeare was possible points to a coming change in the ideals of poetry, its subject and form. A pathetic figure distinctly connected with this change is that of

#### Thomas Chatterton (1752 – 1770),

He was a gifted boy who had found a store of mediæval documents in an old chest which was preserved in St. Mary's Church, Bristol. He so absorbed the spirit of these writings that he could deceive people well versed in old lore by his copies of the old style. He claimed that they were the work of a mediæval priest and poet, Thomas Rowley. In this manner began some of the most remarkable forgeries and literary impostures ever known. Even Horace Walpole\* was deceived by them, but the poet Gray undid Walpole, and Chatterton was ruined as to reputation. He took his own life at the age of eighteen. But his work bears witness to a spirit of pure mediævalism, the *revival of which underlay all true romanticism*. His poem of Aella, and the Balade of Charitie, are proofs of a remarkable genius who could sing as did the poets of the Middle Ages, the art that is inborn and that cannot be learnt. This was one of the two forgeries that stimulated the Return to Nature. The second was that of the Scotchman,

#### Macpherson (1736 – 1796)

who in 1760 began to print what he called the poems of the old Celtic bard, Ossian. This imposture which had less poetic value than the first, spread over England and Europe on a high tide of enthusiasm that helped to prepare the way for true romanticism. It was discovered to be an imposture even in its own day, and had no intrinsic worth. But the rhapsodies had a ring about them that caught the public ear,

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\* A patron of literature and art (1717–1797).

and they helped to drive out the taste for a stiff and restrained excellence of form. Five years later a

### Bishop Percy (1729 – 1811)

published, from an old manuscript he had found, a collection of ballads that had a great influence on the revival of mediævalism. The perusal of this book, Percy's Reliques, was the greatest event in the boyhood of Sir Walter Scott. And Bishop Percy lived to see the result of his work.

### William Cowper (1731 – 1800).

William Cowper, the son of a country clergyman early showed signs of a melancholy that tended to break out in insanity. He was unfitted for a profession and therefore retired to a secluded country life with kind friends. Here he studied and interested himself in a wide range of subjects. But above all he loved the country around, the flat or slightly undulating land watered by the river Ouse; and its modest beauties had a great charm for his simple, affectionate nature. He had reached the age of fifty when a friend, a Lady Austen, asked Cowper to write "on anything", the Sofa, for instance. Cowper assented, choosing as the title, The Task, for a long poem in blank verse. Taking as a starting-point the sofa, he rambles on over a great variety of subjects that interest him, including many careful and minute observations on nature. His *love for the lesser beauties*, the unpretentious common things, gives them an individual value in his eyes. In this he shows a distinct advance on his predecessors, Thomson and Gray. Cowper is essentially a *domestic poet*, a singer of *every day*, not a great genius, but one who leads us up to the great group to come.

Cowper's humorous poem, John Gilpin, is by far the greatest favourite of all his works. In four-line stanza he sings of this "citizen of credit and renown". We see him on his run-a-way horse, we are sorry when he loses hat and wig, still more so when he is pursued on the highroad as a common thief, but we laugh all through the poem and wish we had been there to take part in the fun!

## THE REVIVAL OF THE PURE LYRIC

### William Blake (1757 – 1827)

After a full century of well regulated verse in precise and polished language the voice of pure song burst forth again as a lark's note when Andrews, English Literature.

it trills clearer and louder, the higher it rises. And one of these singers is William Blake, both painter and poet. There is something akin to the Elizabethan lyric poet in him with an added influence from the gossamer fancies of Ossian. Blake wrote of simple things, children, or animals, and sometimes reminds us of Wordsworth of whom he was a forerunner in some of his short lyrics; e. g. the poems beginning:

Little lamb, who made thee? etc.

and also:

Tiger, tiger, burning bright, etc.

This interest in all phases of creation, and a widening of sympathies, is a true indication of romanticism. About the time Blake's *Songs of Innocence* were published, there appeared in Scotland the poems of

### Robert Burns (1759 – 1796),

lyric poet, son of a peasant in Alloway, Ayrshire, in the south of Scotland. He inherited his love of song from his mother. She and an old servant of hers had a great store of tales to which the boy listened eagerly. As he worked with his father on the farm, the quick eye and poet's vision took in all the little objects of beauty around him. And he sang from pure overflowing gladness. Robert Burns was all emotion, he did not know why he sang, he could not help doing so. After his father's death Robert worked on at the farm with his brother. He wrote his first song when he was fifteen, and others followed, on subjects that belonged to his daily life, e. g. "*To a Mouse, Twa Dogs, Hallowe'en, Jolly Beggars, The Cotter's Saturday Night*". When Burns joined the Liberal Party, he wrote the sneering poem, *Holy Willie's Prayer*. He was on the way to be famous. From earliest boyhood Burns was a hard reader, and he read the older poets and tales of the past greedily. At one time, finding the farm did not pay, Burns planned to go to the West Indies, and, in order to raise funds he published his poems. It made him known, and in Edinburgh, where there was a literary circle of people of fine taste Burns was warmly welcomed. The peasant's son was the idol of the hour. But Burns gave offence and was then coolly ignored. He retired to a farm with a wife he loved, and became in time an exciseman with a good salary. He gave offence again by showing too plainly his sympathy with the French Revolution. And his worst foe was his habit of drinking. He died at the age of thirty seven, a victim to fever. Burns' only narrative poem is remarkable, and called forth

very conflicting opinions. Tam o' Shanter, (i. e. Tom of), was applauded by Scott, but condemned by Carlyle.

Tam has been carousing at Ayr, and leaves for home rather the worse for drink, riding on his grey mare Meg. On passing the ruins at Alloway Tam sees a blaze of light showing a scene of riotous revelry. Witches, and hags, and dead men are having a wild dance. When Tam called to one of them whom he recognized, out came the whole company like a swarm of bees. Tam turned his horse's head and went straight for a running stream as this a witch cannot cross. The faithful Meg took it at one bound, but off came her tail, for it was held fast by one of the witches. The poem ends with a moral:

"Think! ye may buy joys o'er dear,  
Remember Tam o' Shanter's mare!"

There is in this poem a combination of the awful, the ludicrous, and the horrible, as is only met with in Shakespeare or William Dunbar.

Burns is the supreme master of genuine song. He lived in an atmosphere of melody. There is a pure lyric note in his shorter poems which are, some of them, made to be set to music. The Scotch people are proud of this peasant poet who could sing in their own rugged speech. Among the best loved of his verses are: *John Anderson, my Jo, John: Should Auld Acquaintance be forgot?: Ae fond kiss, and then we sever: Ye Banks and braes, ye woods and fields!*: The Cotter's Saturday Night: Burns was both a humourist and thinker in his way. Above all, this son of the soil was on the side of the poor man as opposed to rank and wealth; see his lines:

"Rank is but the guinea's stamp;  
The man's the gowd (gold) for a' (all) that!"

Eighteenth century comedy now reaches its high-water mark in

### Richard Brinsley Sheridan (1751 – 1816).

He was an Irishman who lived in England where his superlative wit and ready repartee made him many warm friends. He possessed the gift of oratory in a remarkable degree and, as Member of Parliament made good use of it. His speech on the Begums of Oude won the highest praise from the poet Byron.

Sheridan wrote two comedies, three farces, a comic opera, and a Monody to the Memory of Garrick. Sheridan's two comedies have won for him the reputation of being the first dramatist of his age. *The Rivals* which was not at once well received, is, like its successor, a *comedy of manners*. The scene is laid at Bath, the fashionable watering

place of that day. The somewhat farcical fun is due first, to the inimitable Mrs. Malaprop who, wishing to pass for a high bred lady of fashion, reveals her pitiable ignorance by her misuse and mispronunciation of English words. Secondly, to the mock bravery of two intending combatants in a duel, a parody on the so-called valour of the gentleman of honour. Smollet's novel of Humphrey Clinker may have suggested some of these characters to Sheridan. So also did Fielding's Tom Jones probably suggest various features of Sheridan's *masterpiece*:

The School for Scandal (1777).

In this comedy we have two brothers, Charles, and Joseph Surface, under the guardianship of Sir Peter Teazle who has lately married a pretty country girl. The rich uncle of the two young men, who is in India, sends his nephews large sums of money. But they exceed their allowance and get into debt. Charles, the elder, is the most extravagant of the two but honourable and generous. Joseph Surface is underhand and disloyal. He has sold the family portraits to his brother, and he hopes to marry for her money the girl whom Charles loves for herself, Maria, a ward of Sir Peter. Charles, who is over head and ears in debt, reluctantly decides to sell the family portraits. The auction takes place, and the pictures are bought by a Mr. Premium, all but one. With this Charles will not part for it is the portrait of his uncle Oliver in India. Meanwhile Lady Teazle and her acquaintances carry on various intrigues. The interest of the play comes to a climax in the fourth act when Joseph is unmasks, and the Mr. Premium proves to be the Uncle Oliver who has returned from India unknown to his nephews.

With this comedy the drama of the eighteenth century closes. Goldsmith had portrayed human nature with an artless touch and a boyish good humour. Sheridan draws men with a sharper outline, more coldly and carefully, and with more striking colours. His brilliant dialogues and poignant wit are still unrivalled in English comedy. Both these dramatists by their wholesome tone counteracted the tendency towards sentimental drama which had little real art in it. *With Sheridan English comedy made a brilliant exit from the world of literature.* The century of the novel was at hand.

Sheridan died immersed in debt. But the public gave him a princely funeral.

**Prose, rhetorical and historical.**

Sheridan's fame as an orator was eclipsed by that of Edmund Burke (1729–1797), the politician. In his speeches on American

taxation and the French Revolution he deals with subjects that were going to be of an absorbing interest to thoughtful Englishmen. A spirit of historical enquiry had already given to that age its three great

### Historians.

David Hume (1711–1776), William Robertson (1721–1793) and Edward Gibbon (1737–1794). The first two were Scotchmen who had, with careful study, acquired a good English style. It is clear, correct, without rhetoric, but lacking in charm. Hume's History of England was epoch-making in its own line. Robertson's History of Scotland, and his two other works, on Charles V. and America hold their place in literature as "elegant and judicious writings". It belongs elsewhere to assign these historians their rank in their own department. Edward Gibbon in his History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire accomplished a monumental work that is still an authority for all students. The language is full of a studied affectation, and at times becomes grandiloquent. But in a work of such unusual dimensions, covering such a vast field defects are excusable, and passages are to be found that are dignified and impressive.

### Epistolary Prose in the Eighteenth Century.

The development of this form of prose is seen in three writers who were closely connected with the literary and artistic movements of the day. Lady Mary Wortley Montague (1689–1762) who was a friend of Pope: the Earl of Chesterfield (1694–1773), a cynic and man of the world, and Horace Walpole (1717–1797), author of the Castle of Otranto left behind them correspondence that gives us specimens of letter-writing carried to the point of a fine art.

### MINOR POETS

In the last quarter of this century minor poetry was represented by several writers of pleasing though not powerful verse. Charles Wesley (1707–1788) the brother of the great evangelical revivalist wrote hymns that are still greatly beloved. Anna Letitia Barbauld (1743–1825) wrote poems that occasionally have touches of true poetic genius; e. g. *The Death of the Righteous*, and the quaint and charming poem, *To Life*.

Before the eighteenth century closed the men were born who stood at the head of the great Romantic Movement of which we have already seen the earliest signs and the small beginnings.

## PERIOD VI

# THE FIRST THIRTY YEARS OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

The Romantic Movement · The Novel · Minor Poets · Literary Criticism.

### THE ROMANTIC MOVEMENT

We have seen that the conventional school of perfect form had had its day; that in the middle of the last century a dawning love of nature is evident in Thomson and Gray. It took various forms and became associated with a return to older ideals, to mediæval poetry. And passing through Cowper, Chatterton and Blake it burst forth in beauty in Burns' pure lyric. The sense of a companionship with nature, and a spirit of enquiry and wonder appealed to the imagination. The love of liberty that had degenerated into lawlessness in the case of the French filled the hearts of men and made them young again. People began to turn to the Elizabethan age with a sense of kinship. The Revolution in France had a passing influence on the literature of England at the turn of the century, but Wordsworth and his friends outgrew this. Their love of liberty meant a return to Nature and its teachings in a spirit of reverent delight. And with them begins the nineteenth century Romantic Movement, the *Renaissance of Wonder*.

#### William Wordsworth (1770 – 1850).

William Wordsworth was born at Cockermouth, Cumberland, and spent much of his boyhood in the beautiful neighbourhood of the northern Lakes. The impressions of these early days when his mind was intensely sensitive never faded, and are to be traced in many of his poems of mature age. Wordsworth's career at Cambridge, which passed uneventfully was followed by a stay in France. Here he sympathized warmly with the Revolutionists' views which he gave up later, becoming in the end a Conservative. His family meant him to enter the Church, but Wordsworth decided to make the writing of poetry his

life-work, and means were provided by the generous legacy of a friend.

At this time, the companionship and literary insight of his remarkable sister, Dorothy, were an invaluable help. They lived together in the south of England, where Wordsworth came to know Samuel Taylor Coleridge. *This was an event of the greatest importance for both.* Coleridge rose to be a poet of a higher order, and Wordsworth found a comrade to share his views on poetry. Together they published the *Lyrical Ballads* (1798), a volume of verse that illustrated the new theory of poetry. Not long after, the Wordsworths, brother and sister, went to Germany with Coleridge. After visiting Klopstock, Coleridge parted from them, and they spent a winter in Goslar, where Wordsworth wrote many fine lyrics. On returning to England Wordsworth spent the rest of his long life amidst the scenery that most inspired him, the English Lakes. He married, and settled eventually at Rydal Mount. His friends, Coleridge and Southey, and the writer De Quincey came to live or to stay in the neighbourhood, and three of these remarkable men formed a group which became known by the name of

*The Lake School.* This was bestowed satirically on them for they were said to have founded a "brotherhood of poets", who wrote "poems diluted with plenty of water!" Coleridge denied the existence of any such school, but the name remained long after the new movement, — of which Wordsworth was the leader, — had outlived contempt and won admiration and praise. When Southey died (1843), Wordsworth became *Poet Laureate* but wrote little more before his death in 1850.

Wordsworth's chief work begins with the publication of the *Lyrical Ballads* (1798), an epoch-making book containing a number of poems by himself and Coleridge. They had agreed that the poems should have for subjects, *simple incident treated of in two different ways.* — It was to be Coleridge's task to *humanize and familiarize the supernatural* in connection with ordinary life. And his contribution to the collection was *The Ancient Mariner*. Wordsworth's task was to *exalt and transfigure the natural and the common by the power of the imagination.* He wrote amongst other poems, *The Idiot Boy*, which provoked much ridicule, for it showed his favourite theory carried to an extreme, viz. "that the real language of men" could be used for verse. Wordsworth's desire to be simple in his love for nature, was a very passion. This we see at its *best* in the lines on *Tintern Abbey*, the finest of his poems in the collection of *Lyrical Ballads*.

The *Excursion* (1814) in blank verse, his longest poem, presents no story of exciting interest. The few country people who speak call forth in the poet feelings of deep sympathy with suffering man, and the comfort to be found in the beauties of nature. — We see Wordsworth himself in the lines, “in them did he live. And by them did he live: they *were his life.*” This poem is a part of a *moral epic* (*The Recluse*), left a fragment. Of little poetical value are, *The White Doe of Rylstone*, a narrative poem, and the Ecclesiastical Sonnets. An exception to Wordsworth’s usual manner, is the poem *Laodamia*, “written in a classic style”. After his death the *Prelude* an autobiographical poem appeared. Wordsworth’s shorter poems contain most of his best work e. g. *Lines on Tintern Abbey*: “And I have felt a presence that disturbs me with the joy of elevated thoughts.” The portrait of his wife: “She was a phantom of delight — a perfect woman nobly planned.” “*The Happy Warrior*”: a poem *On daffodils*, “I wandered lonely as a cloud.” And above all his Sonnets, such as: *On Milton*, *On Westminster Bridge*. As a mature man his mind, always filled with a love of the beauty of nature, became filled with great thoughts; and we see this nature poet in his later life in the “*Ode on Immortality*”:

“To me the meanest flower that blows can give  
Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.”

Wordsworth is not a poet readily understood by the young, or the impatient reader. He has a great defect, a *lack of humour*, and this prevents him from seeing the faults of his style when exaggerated. But his best poems have for a thoughtful mind the “healing power that lifts the soul above the tumult of the day’s work, to the tranquil haven of contemplation.” This is where his genius lies.

### Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772 – 1834).

The twin poet of the (so-called) Lake School, the friend of, and joint author with, Wordsworth was Samuel Taylor Coleridge. This gifted son of a Devonshire clergyman went through school and college, but took no degree at Cambridge. He was fitful and inconstant, yet possessed a great personal charm and made many faithful friends. The first was Robert Southey, with whom he planned the founding of an ideal republic in America, for which they fortunately had not the means. Later, Southey and Coleridge married sisters. The turning point of his literary life followed soon after the *meeting with Wordsworth*. Of him Coleridge said that he, Wordsworth, was *the only man*

*whom he felt at all times to be his superior.* The journey to Germany and the stay in that country had a powerful influence on Coleridge. The knowledge he acquired of German is seen in his translation of Schiller's *Wallenstein*, a masterpiece of its kind. He also studied Kant and Lessing, and was much impressed by the *Hamburgische Dramaturgie* which directed his mind to æsthetics.

Coleridge's personal history has a sad and dark side. He left his wife and children to be supported by the hard-worked Southey. He wandered about, and was willing to live at the expense of friends, De Quincey among others. And, led on by illness, he became a victim to the opium habit which brought on a condition of mental and moral indolence. His last nineteen years were spent in the house of a kind-hearted physician near London. But his service in the cause of literature is seen in both poetry and prose. Of the poems published in the volume, *Lyrical Ballads*, the most important was Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner* written in the metre of the old ballad. In this he fulfilled his task of weaving in the supernatural with a common incident. An old sailor has a burdened conscience, and he pours out his long-winded "yarn" to an unwilling listener, a wedding guest who is spell-bound. He tells of a ship that left harbour and disappears in the distance "below the Kirk, below the hill, below the light-house top". And when the albatross, the bird of good omen follows, the sailor shoots it with his cross-bow and brings untold misery on the ship and crew. They are becalmed in a stagnant sea and dying of thirst, "water, water, everywhere, nor any drop to drink". Horror after horror follows, till, in the end, all are lost in the sinking ship but the doer of the cruel deed. He is haunted by the memory of the wrong, and pleads for more humanity in man. "*He prayeth best who loveth best. All things both great and small.*" A true note of the romantic school that felt injustice in any form. Coleridge had a theory that there is a "*class of poetry built on the foundation of dreams*". To this class belongs his "*Ancient Mariner*", and the three other poems for which he is best known, especially "*Kubla Khan*". This was in fact a dream of the poet's, interrupted, and the poem is a fragment. In this dream-poem he writes in his musical verse,

"The shadow of the dome of pleasure,  
Floated midway on the waves,  
Where was heard the mingling measure  
From the fountain and the caves."

Love, or, Genevieve is full of grace and sympathetic feeling. But by the fourth poem, Christabel, Coleridge has done a service greater than he knew. The story of an innocent maid under the spell of a wicked witch is told in *verse of which the metre is Coleridge's highest attainment*. It depends not on the *regular recurrence of rhymes or the number of syllables but on the accents in the line*. This was a return to the principle of old English verse. Scott and Byron who listened to the reading of Christabel felt its peculiar charm; they both imitated the metre that Coleridge had sought to revive, and later used it in narrative poems of their own.

As a prose-writer Coleridge gave the first great *stimulus to the revival of Shakespeare-study* in the nineteenth century. Before his mind gave way he delivered lectures in London on Shakespeare that made him an authority on the subject for all subsequent students. In his Biographia Coleridge explains the theories on poetry that he at one time shared with Wordsworth, but from which he later drifted away. So we see that this man of dreams was not only the poet of tender verse who could write "*The Vale of Chamouni*", "*The Nightingale*" etc. He who was often fragmentary and imperfect in his own work, yet *stimulated men who came after him*, and literature because was the richer Coleridge had lived.

### Robert Southey (1774 – 1843).

Robert Southey, the third in the group of *Lakists*, was the least remarkable in point of intellect, but deserves unstinted praise for his qualities of character. He had an indifferent education and little inclination for scholarship while a student at Oxford. But he showed a taste for general reading and the making of verses, and published a poem, *Joan of Arc*, which brought him £50. After a short absence abroad, and an imprudent marriage in England, Southey settled, as we have seen, in the Lake country, to be in the neighbourhood of Wordsworth and Coleridge.

In 1813 Southey became *Poet Laureate* and received a small pension. But in spite of this, and the most prodigious industry he was always poor. His generosity to Coleridge's deserted wife we have seen. After the death of his first wife he married again, but lost his reason from the long life of overstrain, and died 1843. Southey's poems may be put into two classes:

1. The long ambitious poems of which the subjects are taken from every part of the world, and many epochs of history, some in blank verse, some in rhymed verse, many of them epics.

2. His shorter poems and metrical tales and ballads many of which are among his best works and have a simple pathos and weird charm. To 1. belongs the *Curse of Kehama*, a Hindoo story in rhyme based on Indian mythology. Of this Coleridge said "It was a work of talent but not of genius". Another was on *Roderick the last of the Goths*. A third the *Vision of Judgment*, was chiefly known as being satirized by Lord Byron. 2. Of these shorter poems many were great favourites for long. They are often a good imitation of the ballad, for it is Southey's *special merit that he sought to revive interest in mediæval poetry*. To his best verses belong: "*The Battle of Blenheim*", "*The Inchcape Rock*", "*Bishop Hatto's Tower*", "*The Well of St. Keyne*" etc.

Southey has done great service by his excellent prose seen in his translations and his biographies, of which the *Lives of Nelson*, of Cowper, and of Wesley are the best.

### Sir Walter Scott (1771 – 1832)

#### 1. As Poet.

We have seen that Wordsworth laid down the principles of the Romantic Movement. Coleridge did much to make them known in his way, but he was a man of dreams. There came then one who with a firm and manly step trod the fields of romance, and with his genial temperament made romance popular.

Walter Scott, who came of an old Border family, was born in Edinburgh. A lameness which lasted his lifetime began in his infancy and was accompanied by delicate health. On this account his parents sent the child on long visits to his grandfather's place in the country. Here he heard the peasants' wives sing the old ballads and tell the stories of past border frays and clan quarrels. And his childish imagination dwelt on them as he loved to wander by the river Tweed. The old time enmity between Scotland and England had shown itself by continual outbreaks of hostility between the families of either country who lived on the frontier or border. And expeditions which were little better than murder or robbery, chiefly cattle "lifting", became glorified with the halo of romance. Scott's family had been for generations fighting and sporting men, and loyal adherents of the Stuarts. His mother (née Miss Rutherford), had an excellent memory for tales that

she had heard, and her son writes of her that "she could draw the most striking pictures of a past age. If I have been able" he says "to do anything in the way of painting the past times, it is very much from the studies with which she presented me". With such an ancestry, what wonder this boy eagerly seized on the first copy he saw of *Percy's Reliques* and read so absorbedly that he forgot his dinner! At school Walter had little praise from his schoolmasters, but much from his comrades, who stood round him hearing his stories. His father insisted on his son Walter taking up the law as a profession, but it proved most distasteful to the latter. His interest in *early Scottish ballads and legends* became an overmastering passion with him. One side of his legal duties took him into remote parts of the country. Scott spared no pains or energy in finding old songs and stories. His easy and affable manner with simple folk helped on his investigations. He chatted with the humblest on equal terms and joined in many a jovial carousal in wayside inns, an experience he turned to good use in poetry and prose. Scott read diligently on his favourite subjects, both mediæval and military. Also he learned Italian and Spanish, and was strongly attracted by German Romanticism, which had been influenced by *Percy's Reliques*. He translated Gœthe's play of *Götz von Berlichingen* and his poem of the *Erlking*. Best of all was his rendering of Bürger's *Leonore*, with the title of: *William and Helen*. His success lay, not so much in his reproducing the weirdness of the original, but in the account of the spectre's horsemanship. For Scott himself was a good horseman:

"Tramp, tramp along the land they rode;  
    Splash, splash along the sea;  
The scourge is red, the spur drops blood,  
    The flashing pebbles flee."\*

In 1797 Scott married a French lady of a royalist refugee family who had some private means, Mlle. Charpentier. He directed his energies now more than ever towards increasing his collection of ballads. At length in 1802 appeared the work so long preparing, the *Border Minstrelsy*. It contained a few original poems by Scott and a wide range of legends and Border Ballads. The book was universally accepted with delight, and 800 copies were sold in the first year. Scott's popularity equalled his high reputation as a literary man, and interest in his subject was thoroughly aroused.

\* There is more than one version of this verse. Ed.

The Border Minstrelsy was followed in 1805 by Scott's first long original poem.

#### THE LAY OF THE LAST MINSTREL

It grew out of a request by a lady, later the Duchess of Buccleuch, the wife of the Scotts clan chieftain, who wanted a ballad about a famous goblin. Scott makes the Minstrel, who was "infirm and old", sing of the imp, with the story of an old Border feud as the main narrative. A Duchess of Buccleuch of the 16<sup>th</sup> century was widowed by the murder of her husband in a quarrel with the Kerr family. And her only daughter loves the head of the hostile clan, Lord Cranstoun. Nothing would induce the Duchess to consent to this match. But when her son is taken prisoner by the English and her castle besieged, Cranstoun gallantly comes to the rescue and wins his bride. The second canto begins with the famous lines on Melrose Abbey:

"If thou wouldest view fair Melrose aright,  
Go visit it by pale moonlight."

The words that paint the diffident, aged harper are of the simplest, but yet alive with a romantic glow that renders the passage touching and impressive.

Three years later Scott's greatest poem, *Marmion*, appeared. The hero is drawn as faithless to the woman he loved, but he atones for his wrong to her by dying on the battlefield of Flodden for his country, England. The poem is thoroughly martial in character. Scott wrote most of it when on horseback. He was of a martial temperament, and nothing was so characteristic of him as the lines he once wrote:

"One crowded hour of glorious life  
Is worth a world without a name!"

*Marmion* and *The Lay* are superior to all his other poems in their historic background and the insight they give into the life and manners of the past. For its rugged simplicity, its romantic warlike note, and lines that ring like a trumpet call, *Marmion* will be known as Scott's finest poem.

Of the three chief remaining poems, *The Lady of the Lake*, *Rokeby*, and *The Lord of the Isles*, the first is the best known.

#### THE STORY OF THE POEM

James V. of Scotland, (who died 1542) father of the unfortunate Mary Queen of Scots is out hunting, but loses his way near Loch Katrine. A fair maid, Ellen, gives him shelter unaware of his rank. She and her father Douglas, who has been banished by the King, are under the protecting care of the head of the clan, Roderick Dhu, who hopes to win Ellen for his wife. But she has given her heart to another, Malcolm Graeme. The news spreads that the King will make war on Roderick Dhu, who at once summons the clans to his aid. Ellen next morning brings the King to the lake, and on

parting he gives her a ring which she must send him if she is ever in need of help. Roderick Dhu engages in single combat with the King, and is mortally wounded. Douglas hastens to the King's camp at Stirling where lies the dying chieftain, but he is intercepted and taken prisoner. Then Ellen approaches the King and presents his ring, which he recognizes. Roderick has breathed his last, but the King pardons Douglas and betrothes Ellen to gallant Malcolm Graeme. The third canto begins with the description of lovely Loch Katrine, and in this as in all his work Scott is remarkably true as to colour. Several songs are scattered through the poem, e. g. "Soldier, rest! thy warfare o'er" and the "Ave Maria, maiden mild" that Schubert's musical setting has made famous.

This most picturesque and romantic poem added more to Scott's fame than any *previous work of his*. Interest was aroused in Scotch scenery, and great numbers of tourists visited the Trossachs and Loch Katrine, which till then had been a little known spot. The whole character of the place began to change. Cottages became inns, and struggling families acquired comparative wealth. From the practical side Scott's fame did much for his poorer countrymen.

### Sir Walter Scott.

#### 2. As Novelist.

Walter Scott as a boy read novels with eagerness, his favourite being Horace Walpole's Castle of Otranto. And as early as 1805, the year of the Lay of the Last Minstrel, Scott began to write a Jacobite story in prose, Waverley. It was laid aside and lost and only found in 1814, when five long poems had made him famous. After his marriage Scott had gone to live in the country. He often referred to a hereditary trait that now made itself felt, a tendency to be improvident. Scott's large-heartedness and his increasing popularity made him long to keep house on a larger scale. In 1812 with money chiefly borrowed, he bought a cottage near the Tweed on land that once belonged to the Abbots of Melrose. Hence he called it Abbotsford. It grew into a mansion, and at length became a castle, where Scott exercised a liberal hospitality and was the great man of the county. In spite of the large sums his poems brought him, it was not easy to meet expenses. It is true that Scott spoke of being *beaten* by the passionate young poet Byron, as to popularity, but apart from that, Scott had a leaning towards novel-writing, and time proved that his greatest talent lay in that direction. Waverley, or Sixty Years Since, a story of the Jacobite Rising of 1745, was at first published anonymously. It was an astonish-

ing success, and *it gave its name* to the whole series of twenty-nine novels that Scott produced in the next seventeen years. During thirteen of these his authorship was kept secret. In 1826 his publishing firm, in which he was partner, failed, and Scott was face to face with a loss of £117,000. Then, at the age of fifty-five, he set to work to wipe off the debt, and repaid, by his writings alone £63,000 in five years. This heroic effort endeared him still more to the reading public, but *shortened his life*. Not only he, but his faithful servants had adapted themselves bravely to his reduced circumstances. King George IV. had made him a baronet, and lent him a ship in which to sail for Italy, and Wordsworth wrote farewell to Scott in the words "The might of the whole world's good wishes with him goes". But it was too late. Scott returned by his own wish to spend his last days in his beloved Abbotsford. Here he died (September 21, 1832) within sound of the rippling Tweed that he loved.

Of Scott's twenty-nine novels, *seventeen are historical* in character. *Waverley* and six others deal with *Scottish history*. *Ivanhoe* and six others deal with *English history*. *Quentin Durward* and two others deal with *Continental history*. We see pageants of the historical past march before us from the twelfth to the eighteenth century. And in his works of pure fiction, we have an insight into political and social conditions that seem to us a perfectly natural background for the story and its sentiment. The people are generally types that exactly fit their surroundings, with their gallantry, their class distinctions, their superstitions, and law-breaking habits, e. g. thieving or smuggling. *Guy Mannering*, *Rob Roy*, and *The Antiquary* took the hearts of the people by storm, as did *Ivanhoe* the favourite of young readers. Scott has drawn men better than women. The latter are outlined with a gentlemanly reserve; all psychological problems are avoided; and, while we are interested in them, we judge them from a respectful distance. Although Scott's novels contain many inaccuracies, yet he was the *creator of the historical novel*. In his hands it became *a work of literary art*. It makes us familiar with great historical epochs and historical figures, e. g. Richard Cœur de Lion, and Queen Elizabeth. Scott awakened an interest in history that was lasting, and for depth and variety his historical novels such as *Kenilworth\** have not yet been surpassed. Above all, his work is marked by a wholesome tone, an

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\* Extract from *Kenilworth* in: *Readings in English Literature*.

absence of the morbid or artificial. Scott, it was, who made the *romantic novel popular* in his fine old gentlemanly manner.

### George Gordon, Lord Byron (1788 – 1824).

George Gordon Noel Byron, the most popular poet of his day was born in London and came of an aristocratic race on both sides. His father, a reckless, luckless Captain of the Guards, had chosen for his second wife the heiress of an old Scotch family, Catherine Gordon, afterwards the mother of the future poet. After spending his wife's money Captain Byron abandoned her to go abroad, never to return. Mrs. Byron took her two-year old son to Aberdeen where they lived in "genteel poverty"; till by the death of his grand-uncle, Byron at the age of eleven, inherited the family title and estates, including beautiful Newstead Abbey in Nottinghamshire. He was now a peer and had to be educated accordingly. His mother's training was that of a passionate, capricious woman who alternately overwhelmed her handsome son with caresses and reproaches. And with a head the gods might envy the boy had a lameness which galled his sensitive soul. Rarely has any genius come into the world so heavily handicapped, not only by a physical defect but by an inherited patrician arrogance; and his pride suffered acutely under the taunts of his mother and his playmates. Byron was sent to the public school, Harrow, and later to Cambridge. He made a great effort at both places to join in the sports as far as he was able. At college he studied little, read books of travel, and took an indifferent and defiant tone towards the authorities.

While still at Cambridge Byron published a volume of poems entitled "Hours of Idleness" (1807), which was severely criticised in the Edinburgh Review. He answered by a biting satire, *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*, a poem in which he hit at others besides his critics, and of which he was later ashamed. But it served to announce his genius to the world. In 1809 Byron, who had attained his majority, became his own master and decided to set out on his travels, a necessary part of a young nobleman's education. In two years he enriched his imagination by visiting Portugal and Spain, passing along the shores of the Mediterranean to Greece and Turkey. His impressions and reflections he embodied in the first two cantos of his poem, *Childe Harold* (Harold the Knight), the publication of which made him the prince of English poets, the *popular idol of the hour*.

During the next three years Byron wrote narrative poems, having

as a background the scenery of modern Greece, the people, their manners and passions: *The Giaour*, *The Bride of Abydos*, *the Corsair*, *Lara*, *The Siege of Corinth* and *Parisina*. Most of these were composed very rapidly. To this date belong his "Hebrew Melodies," short poems of which one is the finest specimen of English dactylic verse, *The Destruction of Sennacherib*, beginning: "The Assyrian came down like a wolf on the fold."

In 1815 Byron married Miss Milbanke. It was an ill-assorted marriage that ended with a legal separation a year later, after the birth of a daughter. This circumstance was the death-blow to Byron's popularity in society. He was treated with aversion and scorn by those who had flattered him, and, in a spirit of bitter resentment Byron left England never to return.

One faithful friend stood by him, John Hobhouse, who writes thus in his "Recollections," — "Byron, whom I love more and more every day," Hobhouse, who was "best man" at the wedding, writes of the decorously unemotional marriage in the drawingroom: "Never was lover less in haste." He admits Byron's faults and his bad temper, also "the unfortunate habit of ironically exaggerating" his own failings. Of their leave-taking at Dover Hobhouse says: "I ran to the end of the wooden pier, and the dear fellow pulled off his cap and waved it to me. I gazed until I could not distinguish him any longer. God bless him for a gallant spirit and a kind one!" Hobhouse was Byron's "best friend whom that tempestuous generous nature was truly fortunate in keeping."\*

On leaving England Byron travelled through Belgium and Germany to Switzerland. On the Lake of Geneva he made a long stay. Here a friendship began between him and the poet Shelley, and Byron's spirits began to revive. He resumed his work, and continued to write during some years spent in Italy. Unfortunately his manner of living in Venice did him little credit. But in Pisa Byron and Shelley were the centre of a congenial and distinguished circle.

The love of freedom was Byron's favourite theme; he stood before the eyes of all Europe as the champion of liberty. And when in 1823 a Committee in England formed to help the Greeks to struggle for independence Byron was elected a member. The exiled poet was both delighted at the honour and glad to take up active service for the

\* From: *Times Literary Supplement*, July 9, 1909.

Andrews, English Literature.

cause of freedom. He set out for Greece, and showed much courage and ability amidst difficulties. But in a few months he was attacked by fever and died at Missolunghi April 19, 1824. The body was brought to England and buried in Hucknall near Newstead, for burial in Westminster Abbey was refused.

Byron's poetry has an *essentially personal character*. In his *heroes* we see the *poet in various phases*, and his own experiences and feelings are repeated in the story. When he first fascinated English society by his good looks and his aristocratic air he indulged in a melancholy dreaminess. But his exile made grief a real and bitter element in his existence, by which he gained in depth and force of feeling. Hence Byron's best poems belong to the last eight years of his life. Such are, the third and fourth cantos of *Childe Harold*; *The Prisoner of Chillon*; the dramatic poem of *Manfred*; *The Vision of Judgment*; the famous, *Don Juan*, and a short powerful poem on *Darkness*, perhaps the most objective verses ever written by Byron:

"I had a dream, which was not all a dream,  
The bright sun was extinguished, and the stars  
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### Childe Harold

the poem by which Byron is best known, the first part of which established his fame, contains much of his best work. In this Byron following Thomson revived the Spenserian stanza, and set the example for a later age of using this melodious verse. Europe was still engaged in the struggle with Napoleon, and this young English poet seized the point on which international interest was centred. He gave an importance to his hero's travels by touching on the places connected with the fight against the tyrant. The young Knight Harold is but a thin disguise for *himself*, Byron, tired after dissipation, and world-weary. He takes his steps to the battlefields of Portugal and Spain, and places where Napoleon has been defeated. With the third canto begins the greater force evident in most of his writing when in exile. This is seen in the stanzas on the Eve of the Battle of Waterloo, the result of his journey through Belgium, written in an objective rather than in his usual subjective mood. The splendour of the scene shines out in the grand swelling verse:

"There was a sound of revelry by night,  
And Belgium's capital had gathered then

Her Beauty and her Chivalry, and bright,  
The lamps shone o'er fair women and brave men" . . .

And the increasing rapidity in the movement of the verse brings the heedless, reckless merriment before our eyes, till the war note breaks in on the festivity —

"Arm! Arm! it is — it is — the cannon's opening roar!"

Later on the descriptions of the "castled crag of Drachenfels" and the wide and winding Rhine are full of beauty. Harold's pining to be loved makes itself heard, but with the stay on the Lake of Geneva a more cheerful note is struck, due probably to Shelley's society. A magnificent description of the lake in moonlight follows. The fourth canto written in Italy paints Venice, Rome and Florence in glowing colours with a respectful tribute to the immortal names associated with art and sculpture. The lines on the ocean, known and quoted over the whole world, end the poem:

"Roll on, thou deep and dark blue ocean, roll."

By this poem, Childe Harold, Byron took the heart of the Continent by storm, and kept it; and English poetry became *for the first time European*.

### The Prisoner of Chillon

tells in the first person the sufferings of a captive so deadened by his captivity that he was unable to rejoice at his liberty when it came: "I learned to love despair." "My very chains and I grew friends." The story is in part historic. The name of Byron is to be seen scratched on the dungeon walls of the Castle of Chillon which is still visited by hundreds every year.

In Byron's heroes, as seen in his poems or verse-romances, such as Mazeppa, The Corsair, The Giaour and The Bride of Abydos, we recognize the well-known type of the brigand order; the flashing eyes, the dark hair, the stern and haughty bearing of men who could boast of "a thousand crimes and one virtue!" In the Giaour Byron followed Sir Walter Scott in style. Scott, whose popularity was at its height as a poet, was eclipsed by the passionate younger writer. But Byron's admiration of Scott was most sincere although "he beat out of the field Scott's gentle chieftains" with his own pirates and bandits.

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*Sardanapalus*, a tragedy, which shows great dramatic power, the scene, as its name implies, is Nineveh. It is dedicated to The Illustrious Gœthe. *Marino Faliero* takes us to Venice. The last and best tragedy, *Cain*, was warmly praised by Scott.

**Manfred,**

a dramatic poem, is full of mystery and a haunting melancholy. The background of the mighty Alps, the supernatural elements that come into play as mountain spirits who seek to claim a man whose soul is weighed down by remembrance of a past crime, all this throws a strange and unearthly gloom over the story, the sense of impending tragic fate. The Abbot of a monastery seeks to reclaim the lost one, but Manfred despises prayer and longs for Death, only Death, as his best friend. And thus he dies. The descriptions of the majestic witchery of the mountains that awaken recollections of other scenes, such as the night "within the Coliseum's wall", have a power in them that is due in part to a strongly subjective note. Some inner conflict of his own must have suggested much of this weird tale to Byron, and he clothes his own feelings and his pictures of nature in verse which is often of unsurpassed beauty.

The *Vision of Judgment*, a parody on Southey's poem of the same name, sparkles with wit and humour, expressed in fine rythmical verse. The famous poem of

**Don Juan,**

Byron's *last work*, relates to the adventures, rather unpleasant than otherwise, of a young Spanish nobleman. In the lines describing the hero's visit to England Byron indulges in bitter sarcasm against English society. *Don Juan* is a triumph of poetic art. The choice of the verse is the best that could be made for such a subject, — worldliness as described by a worldly poet, but also one whose whole nature was tinged with poetic passion and disgust of the world, *Weltschmerz*. In the poem, the Poet's Song, we see a fitting and pathetic prelude to the death of the author:

"The Isles of Greece, the Isles of Greece,  
Where burning Sappho loved and sung . . .

and

The mountains look on Marathon,  
And Marathon looks on the sea,  
And musing there an hour alone  
I dreamed that Greece might still be free."

Byron, who died in the cause of political liberty never attained to an inner freedom of the soul. He was essentially a revolutionist, one who could tear down rather than build up. His hatred of the shallow artificialism of English society as it then was, his desire to burst all bonds of any kind, filled his being and his poetry which was the expression of his being. He stands alone in our literature, the most romantic figure of the century, a wayward genius, pathetic in his solitary grandeur.

But though his works show the mark of his individuality in a remarkable degree Byron was influenced in various ways by previous and also living writers: by Dryden and Pope in his rhetorical, flowing verse, by Swift in his biting sarcasm, by Sir Walter Scott in his "verse romances", seen in the *Giaour* partly suggested by *Marmion*, by Coleridge whose *Christabel* gave him the metre for the *Bride of Abydos*.

But Byron alone brought into English Literature the *personal, the subjective and impassioned element in poetry*. His descriptions of nature in her various phases are chiefly interpretations of his own moods, of the storms or calm, sunshine or shadow of his own vivid, tempestuous nature. The great mass of his writings, full of virility, brought a rush of new life into English Literature. Faults, such as a lack of finish, a tendency to be melodramatic, or defects in the use of metre are imperfections that are mostly evident to the native-born Englishman. This fact, together with the hostile attitude of his country towards him in his life-time, accounts for the depreciation of Byron's work in England. But Matthew Arnold did much to raise him in public opinion, and he is now taking an increasingly higher rank. Abroad Byron's individuality *dominated all Europe*. Germany and Italy, worshipped this genius, and Gœthe said of him that no such character had ever appeared in literature, and that the English had no other poet like Byron! *He stands out as a unique figure in the first quarter of the nineteenth century.*

### Percy Bysshe Shelley (1792 – 1822).

No poet of this time had so much in common with Byron in his birth and early associations as Percy Bysshe Shelley. Shelley came of an old county family in Horsham, Sussex, and had aristocratic and conservative connections. The scenery not far from his home was that of the treeless South Downs with their strange intangible beauty. The

flitting shadows of the clouds that chase each other and vanish, and the wide horizon that gives a sense of infinite space was a fitting background for his youthful dreams. As a boy he showed signs of the peculiar charm that marked him throughout his life, the blue eyes with the wild and yearning expression that seemed often not to see what was directly before him, the hair curling over his white forehead, and the delicately formed hands. His voice was gentle but would rise to an angry shriek if he heard of any act of injustice. Like Byron he early conceived a deep-rooted hatred to any form of tyranny, and these ideas he took with him to Eton, where he rebelled against long-established customs of public school life. He seldom joined in the school games but loved to wander alone, absorbed in his own world of dreams. When at Oxford his antipathy to religious authority was expressed in a short pamphlet, *On the Necessity of Atheism*, for which he was promptly expelled.

Shelley became increasingly estranged from his conservative and intolerant father, and the more so when he ran away with a girl of inferior station to his own. He thought she was also the victim of an unjust father and he married her from pity rather than affection. The result was unhappiness to both. Shelley neglected his wife who, after a few years, took her own life. The two children of this marriage were kept away from Shelley by order of Court, on account of his irreligious views. Embittered by this he decided to leave England for ever. He made his home first in Switzerland, then in Italy, with a second wife, Mary Godwin, a very gifted young woman in whom he found a true helpmate. Shelley's friendship with Byron now became a prominent feature in his life. His thirsty soul was grateful for the genuine admiration shown him by the popular poet.

Byron said of Shelley "He was the most gentle, the most amiable, and the least worldly-minded person I ever met, full of delicacy, disinterested beyond all other men and possessing a degree of genius joined to simplicity as rare as it is admirable". And Shelley said that he could not write when too much in Byron's company, for "the sun has extinguished the glow-worm!"

Before leaving England Shelley had already published a fairy-like poem Queen Mab; a long poem Alastor or the Spirit of Solitude; and The Revolt of Islam, an expression of his own spirit of revolt. Alastor depicts a conflict between the real and the ideal; a young poet who longs for appreciation ends by dying lonely and neglected. In

Italy Shelley wrote two dramas, neither of them suitable for the stage. The Cenci deals with a painful and repellent theme but betrays great, almost Elizabethan power on the part of the author. The second drama, Prometheus Unbound abounds with fine lyric passages and ends with a profusion of lyrics of great beauty.

Many friends gathered about the two poets, Byron and Shelley, and one, a sweet singer after Shelley's own heart came to Italy, but only to die, John Keats. And Shelley mourned him in his poem *Adonais* that *takes rank with the world's finest elegies*. He speaks of it himself as "the least imperfect of my compositions". He little thought how soon he would join his *Adonais* among the immortal dead.

The two friends, Byron and Shelley, had had sailing boats built for their own use, and Shelley's he named, "Don Juan". In it he set sail for Leghorn\* on a fine day with a friend, but did not return. A storm coming up in the Gulf of Spezzia had wrecked the vessel, and the bodies of the dead were soon washed ashore. It was found that Shelley had taken with him a volume of Keats, poems, the leaves folded back where he had been reading. At Byron's wish Shelley's body was burned on the sands near Pisa and his ashes laid in the Protestant Cemetery in Rome near the remains of Keats. The heart, which had resisted the fire, was taken to England and buried at Boscombe near Bournemouth on the south coast. On Shelley's grave-stone in Rome are engraved these lines from *The Tempest*:

"Nothing of him that doth fade  
But shall suffer a sea-change  
Into something rich and strange."

In his *Adonais* Shelley sings of the transition from death, the end of sorrow, to an immortality of joy and rapture. For the soul to be absorbed into the forces of nature is insufficient to satisfy the yearning for immortality. *Adonais* passes into the company of the illustrious dead:

"He lives, he wakes — 'tis Death is dead, not he;  
Mourn not for *Adonais*. . . .

He is a portion of the loveliness  
Which once he made more lovely."

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\* Leghorn = Ital. Livorno.

The closing stanza is strangely symbolic of Shelley's death.

The breath whose might I have invoked in song  
 Descends on me; my spirit's bark is driven  
 Far from the shore, far from the trembling throng  
 Whose sails were never to the tempest given.  
 The massy earth and spher'd skies are riven!  
 I am borne darkly, fearfully afar!  
 Whilst, burning through the inmost veil of heaven,  
 The soul of Adonais, like a star,  
 Beacons from the abode where the Eternal are.

Shelley lived in a world of his own; he walked with his gaze fixed on space which he filled with beings of his own imagination, and so he stumbled over the stones on the hard road of real life. He is at his best in his short lyrics, which are masterpieces of *ethereal, intangible beauty*. Two generations after his death these poems with their note of yearning sadness found a response among his countrymen in such lines as these:

"The desire of the moth for the star,  
 Of the night for the morrow,  
 The devotion to something afar  
 From the sphere of our sorrow —"

His most famous lyrics are, the *Ode to the West Wind*, *To Night*, *The Cloud*, *The Sensitive Plant*. The *man and poet* Shelley is best seen in his poem, *To a Skylark*:

"We look before and after,  
 And pine for what is not;  
 Our sincerest laughter  
 With some pain is fraught;  
 Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought... .

Better than all measures  
 Of delightful sound,  
 Better than all treasures  
 That in books are found,  
 Thy skill to poet were, thou *scorer of the ground!*"

In his respect for classic form, of which we find traces in the beautiful verse of the *Adonais*, Shelley by no means *scorned the ground that others* had trodden before him. But it is his *lark's note*, the *trill of ecstasy*, that mounts higher and higher, till it is lost, that gives Shelley the highest place as a lyric poet of Romanticism.

**John Keats (1795 – 1821).**

John Keats who came of humble parentage — his father kept a livery stable — was given a good education in which classics were included and eagerly studied by the boy. But he soon had to exchange these for an apprenticeship to a surgeon. This did not deter him from taking up literature in his leisure moments, and *his whole nature turned to poetry as a plant turns to the light*. His interest centred in Elizabethan literature, and Spenser he loved; an influence seen later in his choice of language. He soon gave himself up to poetic art, and in 1817 wrote his poem, *Endymion* on the Greek legend. The first line of this, the work of an obscure youth, has become a national possession: “*A thing of beauty is a joy for ever*”; But his poetic personality, his golden curls, and flashing eyes were still unknown to the world! The remaining four years of his short life record the on-coming of consumption, his romantic attachment to a Miss Fanny Brawne, the production of poems in rapid succession, and the merciless attacks of critics in the periodicals. At length in 1820 Keats sailed for Rome hoping to overcome his malady. But it was too late. He died February 23, 1821 and was laid to rest in the Protestant cemetery in Rome, near by the pyramid of Cestius. On his grave-stone is the inscription that he wished placed there:

Here lies one whose name was writ in water.

His genius was unrecognized even by Byron. Shelley mourned him, but only years after Keats' death did the world realize that a young man not yet twenty-five had contributed to literature poems of a rare beauty, of a wonderful perfection of form.

*Endymion* was followed by *Lamia*; *The Eve of St. Agnes*, a tale of the witching midnight hour; *Isabella, or the Pot of Basil*, the story of which was taken from Boccaccio; *Hyperion*, a fragment in grand and impressive verse. In *The Ode on a Grecian Urn*, Keats' most classic poem, he was influenced by Lessing's *Laokoon*. The closing lines give us the keynote of his work:

“Beauty is truth, truth beauty: that is all  
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.”

The poem of *La Belle Dame sans Merci* which tells of a spell-bound knight enthralled by a beautiful maid, has a peculiar charm of its own. This story and, *The Eve of St. Agnes* have inspired many painters of a later day, e. g. Holman Hunt, and Sir John Millais.

Keats preached the gospel of the *worth of beauty*, and he revelled in the luxuriance of it. He says: "I have loved the principle of beauty in all things, and if I had had time I would have made myself remembered." Matthew Arnold writes of him: "His work has the rounded perfection and *felicity of loveliness*, of which Shakespeare is the great master." Keats feared that his name was "writ in water". "Yes, but in the Water of Life". The influence of Keats on the great singers that came after him is seen in Tennyson, Mrs. Browning, and many of the poets of America.

### THE NOVEL

Two novelists deserve mention here, both women and both warmly praised by Scott.

#### **Maria Edgeworth (1767 – 1849),**

a gifted Irishwoman who wrote improving books for the young, Moral Tales etc. She first distinguished herself as a novelist, when she drew with humour and truthfulness in Castle Rackrent, a picture of the Irish landlords of her time. This was followed by The Absentee, both books, like all her works, being written with a purpose. Miss Edgeworth wished to call attention to the miserable condition of the Irish, and its causes, and did so with force, vivacity, and good sense. She chose her subjects chiefly from among the people, and so bore a partial resemblance to Scott; and she set the example of writing good fiction in a good cause with philanthropic intentions. Her once most popular works have met with undeserved neglect of late years.

The second of these two women writers

#### **Jane Austen (1775 – 1817)**

has now a place among the great novelists of the nineteenth century. Her work cannot be understood without some knowledge of her life. She was the daughter of a country clergyman of good family who had a living in Hampshire. And her life was passed in the country, with the exception of some time spent in Bath, at that date a watering place of fashion. She was ignorant of big towns or gay society as seen in London, and of the bustle of politics. Her circle of friends was limited to the few families of gentry in a country neighbourhood who had no connection with trade or business. Within such limits she spent her

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\* quoted from Sir E. Gosse.

uneventful life and died unmarried at the age of forty. And in such dull, commonplace surroundings did a young woman write novels that have continued to rise in public opinion, and have survived the test of a century of criticism, above all of *the century in which the novel became a work of art*.

Jane Austen began to write at twenty-one to please herself. Most of her novels were not published for many years, two of them only after her death. (See the following.)

	Written	Published
Pride and Prejudice . . . .	1796	1813
Sense and Sensibility . . . .	1797	1811
Northanger Abbey . . . .	1798	1818
Mansfield Park . . . . .	1814	
Emma . . . . .	1811–16	1816
Persuasion . . . . .		1818

Jane Austen was the first to make use of realism in the domestic novel. She describes the men and women of her time in their everyday existence, with precision and a quiet humour, and without affectation. She never obtrudes her own personality. The characters are well drawn and kept apart without any attempt at dramatic effect. She limits herself to the side of life that she knows, and does not try to imagine conditions with which she is unacquainted. Her style is plain and easy to understand without being bald. It has been spoken of as cold. Rather let us say restrained, entirely without exaggeration. Her keen sense of humour and the simple sincerity of her work show a refined mind gifted with a rare power of observation. She is a miniature painter who never hurries over her work. Sir Walter Scott wrote of her in his diary (March 14, 1826): "Read, for the third time at least, Miss Austen's finely written novel of *Pride and Prejudice*. The *big Bow wow strain* I can do myself like any one now going; but the exquisite touch which renders ordinary, commonplace things interesting from the truth of the description, is denied to me."

A striking lack in Jane Austen is the absence of any description of natural scenery. And the poor have no place in her works. While she describes women with infinite care, she will sometimes generalize in drawing an attractive hero who carries all before him, e. g. Mr. Darcy in *Pride and Prejudice*. Of her women it has been said: "Her heroines have a stamp of their own, a certain gentle self-respect, and humour, and hardness of heart. Love, with them, does not mean a passion as much as an interest, deep and silent."

Macaulay has gone so far as to assert that the only writer with whom Jane Austen can be compared is Shakespeare. It has been more justly observed by a later critic that there is a resemblance between her and Goldsmith. In her skilful use of everyday English to describe everyday people and things, she created a *literary style that has defied imitation*. And as a creator *in her own line* she stands *in the first rank* with the great novelists of the nineteenth century.

Pride and Prejudice has for the background of the story the family life of Mr. and Mrs. Bennet and their five daughters. Mrs. Bennet is a peevish woman of small mind. Mr. Bennet looks on with a quiet, dry humour at his wife's schemes for her daughters' happiness, and makes running comments on her little plans. The characteristics of the five sisters are plain from the first and consistently drawn to the end of the story. The handsome eldest sister Jane and the intelligent one next her, Elizabeth, are devoted to each other in a straightforward unsentimental fashion. The studious sister Mary, who "reads great books and makes extracts", is not the favourite of the authoress. And the youngest, who lives to attract, makes a foolish runaway match with an officer. The young men of the story are first, a Mr. Bingley, who buys an estate in the neighbourhood which establishes his importance in his little world. But then a handsome, proud, patrician hero appears on the scene, Mr. Darcy, who feels himself superior to his surroundings, and is careful not to be too attractive to the ladies. A third figure is the conceited Mr. Collins, who quickly offers his hand to Elizabeth and is astonished at her refusal. Darcy, in spite of an arrogant manner, proves his real goodness of heart by rendering the Bennet family a great service. Elizabeth, who has shown a high-spirited independence in her attitude to Mr. Darcy, finally yields to a genuine affection for him and accepts his hand in marriage. Her sister Jane has meanwhile consented to become Mrs. Bingley. Mrs. Bennet is in a flutter of delight at losing her two daughters, but Mr. Bennet feels the absence of his "little Lizzie" sadly. Of these commonplace incidents we have a story of which the interest never flags, of which the humour never grows stale, nor the wit wearisome. Especially in the drawing of a father is Jane Austen at her best.

### MINOR POETS OF THIS TIME

During this age of Romanticism several minor singers attained a great popularity. Chief among these is

#### Thomas Moore (1779 – 1852),

a gay-hearted, witty Irishman whose musical voice made him a great favourite in society. He became Byron's friend and his loyal biographer. The influences of Byron and Romanticism in general are evident in his poems. At first the writer of light satirical verse, he afterwards followed Southey's example in taking an Oriental subject for his longest

poem, *Lalla Rookh*. It was famous in its day, and one of its four stories, *Paradise and the Peri*, is still a favourite in Germany, where its musical setting by Schumann helped to make it known. Moore's lasting fame rests on his *Irish Melodies*, written by him in order to be set to musical airs already known. They linger in the memory and rank among the sweetest short lyrics of the nineteenth century. These songs have been compared to the sound of bells dying away in the distance. Such are: *The Minstrel Boy*; *The Last Rose of Summer*; *The Harp that once through Tara's Halls Its sweetest music shed: Oft in the stilly Night*.

*Lalla Rookh* (= *Tulip Cheek*), an Eastern Princess, is on her way with her suite to meet the Prince to whom she was long since betrothed by her father. A young minstrel relieves the tediousness of the journey by telling her four eastern tales. The second, *The Paradise and the Peri* (= fairy) is the best of the four. Its story: A Peri who has been cast out of Paradise will be received back when she brings the choicest gift that earth can offer to Heaven. She descends to seek it, and finds the last drop of blood shed by a dying warrior for his country; again, the last sigh of a noble young girl who dies in nursing her plague-stricken lover; and lastly, the tear of repentance shed by a sinful man when he sees a child kneeling in prayer. This tear alone is accepted, and the Peri is received back to Paradise. The minstrel who tells the story proves to be none other than the betrothed of the Princess.

Here belongs the poetess

### **Felicia Hemans (1793 – 1855)**

who enjoyed a great reputation in her lifetime. Her poems have the melodious sweetness that adapts itself to music. Of this kind, her lyric: *The Better Land* has a religious pathos and simplicity. So also *The Child's First Grief*. *The Voice of Spring* and *The Homes of England* are fine, spirited verses. Few poems were, during two generations, so often recited by young people as *Casabianca*, beginning:

"The boy stood on the burning deck,  
Whence all but he had fled."

Mrs. Hemans was one of the earliest writers to provide poems for the young, of a pleasing nature, without being heavily weighted with a moral. Sir Walter Scott remarked of her verse that it had too many flowers for the fruit.

Other women, such as Letitia E. Landon and Joanna Bailie, were poetesses of the time, but the fame of women who came after them outshone their modest light, which has almost been forgotten.

At this time lived also

**Thomas Campbell (1777–1844)**

who is best known for the popular and patriotic poem

"Ye Mariners of England,  
That guard our native seas!"

Coming close after this as favourites are: The Battle of the Baltic, The Soldier's Dream, and, Hohenlinden. This last named battle piece has a grim truthfulness in its description of the scene of the fight. The verse marches on with a soldierly tread and contains the much quoted lines at the close:

"Few, few shall part where many meet;  
The snow shall be their winding sheet.  
And every turf beneath their feet  
Shall be a soldier's sepulchre."

### THE GROWTH OF LITERARY CRITICISM

The first quarter of the nineteenth century is conspicuous, not only for the great names that adorn its literary roll, but also for the unusual number of works that some of these authors were able to produce. The industry of Southey, the incessant toil of Scott, and Byron's fertile genius caused the supply of literature to exceed anything of the kind yet known. The Romantic school had brought about a revolution in taste which met with an opposition that expressed itself *in the periodicals*. The most prominent of these, the *Edinburgh Review* (begun 1802) assumed a tone of official criticism that inspired awe and dread. Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley and Keats were not spared its censure. But a second paper, started seven years later, *The Quarterly Review*, enjoyed dealing hard blows at new authors, and surpassed its rival in the injustice of its attacks. The power of these two periodicals was a peculiar feature of this time, and one that can now hardly be understood. In the course of the next fifteen years a *more humane criticism made itself felt*. A group of men of broader views showed an intelligent and sympathetic understanding of the works they reviewed. And they did more in their modest journals for the development of literary criticism than their arrogant forerunners had ever done. To these reviewers belonged the enthusiastic students of Shakespeare: Coleridge and Hazlitt; also the friend of Byron, Shelley and Keats, Leigh Hunt; and last, but most loveable of all, "Gentle Charles Lamb".

**Charles Lamb (1775 – 1834),****Essayist and critic,**

was born and brought up in London, which he loved with the devotion that the Romantic poets felt for the country. His education at Christ's Hospital was twice the subject of later literary essays. The early life of "gentle-hearted Charles" was marked by trials and sorrows bravely borne. Not the least was the faithful care of his sister Mary, who was subject to occasional outbreaks of insanity, but who, on the other hand, was a devoted companion and valuable help in his literary life-work.

After some early journalistic work, Charles Lamb published in 1798 a story of country life called *Rosamond and Old Blind Margaret*, which shows traces of Richardson's influence. *But the chief work of his life lay in another direction.* In 1807 twenty Tales from Shakespeare, written for children by Charles Lamb and his sister Mary, proved a great success. And the careful choice of language showed the true student of Shakespeare who could lead both children and adults to study the master. This was followed by *Specimens of English Dramatic Poets contemporary with Shakespeare*. It was an attempt in advance of his day, for even the *names of these poets* were little known to the reading public. When *The London Magazine* was started in 1820, Lamb contributed the famous Essays of Elia, that deal with a wide range of subjects, humorous and pathetic. He adopted an old-world style, but without affectation. Whatever he treated of, whether literary criticism or personal recollections, it was always the same kindly heart that shone through his good humour and dainty style. The Essays of Elia proclaimed Lamb to be a master among essayists. Humour and pathos, and a dreamy contemplative tone based on reminiscences, are most characteristic of Charles Lamb. Who has read without a sympathetic thrill the reverie of Dream Children? And has any one got to the end of the Dissertation on Roast Pig without laughing till he felt young again?

The cultivation of prose as a fine art was carried still further by

**Thomas De Quincey (1785 – 1859).**

He was born at Manchester, and when seven years old he lost his father. His mother, a woman of fine mind, but of a stern unbending type, sent the shy, exceedingly sensitive boy to schools that aroused his aversion. At length, when seventeen, Thomas ran away and lived

a lonely vagrant life in London, scenes of which he later described. Owing to physical suffering, he now began to take opium, a habit which eventually influenced his literary work. Through the help of a rich uncle in India De Quincey then went to Oxford, astonished an examiner by his learning, but was too shy to take his degree. He was very short of stature, a shrinking, timid little figure, little noticed by his fellow students. But he had thrown himself heart and soul into the study of German, its literature and philosophy. About 1807 De Quincey met Coleridge, for whom he began to feel a profound veneration. His life took a new start, for he settled (1809) permanently at the Lakes, near Wordsworth, and often saw not only his friend Coleridge, but Southey, Lamb, and others of literary tastes. He devoted much time to studying *Kant*, *Fichte*, *Schelling*, and *Jean Paul Richter*. Yet alas! the opium habit increased. A change for the better came with his marriage (1816), which was soon followed by the acceptance of the editorship of a provincial paper. Journalistic work began to absorb him. After 1821 both Lamb and De Quincey wrote regularly for *The London Magazine*, a new journal. In it appeared a long series of contributions from an unknown author, the *Confessions of an Opium Eater*, the work by which De Quincey is now best known. Ultimately he moved to Edinburgh, where he lived till his death.

In spite of his innate shyness De Quincey could be, in the home circle he loved, a brilliant talker, with a vast range of words at his command. And his writings, which are enormous in volume, and of a bewildering diversity, are in part the result of his conversational gifts. It has been said of him that he writes *as a superb chatterer*. *To read him is like walking through an old curiosity shop*. And brain work of the highest order underlies it all. His works are chiefly essays, criticisms, or sketches, ranging over a wide field of subjects. Above all else De Quincey excelled in the autobiographic style. The personal nature of his *impassioned prose* is best seen in his *Confessions of an Opium Eater*, based on his own experience. He added to these a sequel of *Dream Phantasies*, of which the exquisite fragments *Suspiria de Profundis* (= Sighs from the Depths) are among his masterpieces of dreamy tenderness. His sympathy with suffering, his love of the occult or mysterious, his sense of the tragic loneliness of life, all strike vibrating chords in us, that linger like an organ melody in the memory. Yet this dreamer was the originator of a *precise and fastidious distinction in style*, a cultivation of subtle effects, of *fine*

*gradations of emotion*; a manner of writing never yet equalled by others, but one which has powerfully influenced our literature\*.

To these names must be added that of

### Walter Savage Landor (1775 – 1864)

whose long life stretched from the days of Burns to those of the great Victorian writers. Landor united in his stormy nature many contrasting qualities. His quarrelsome temperament kept him in a constant tumult of feeling, yet his perception of beauty was of the keenest, and found expression in a classic purity of form in his writing. Dickens has drawn Landor – without his fine intellect – as *Mr. Boythorn* in *Bleak House*, a loud-voiced man who went about caressing his canary bird.

The influence of the Romantic school is seen in Landor's first long poem, *Gebir*. His shorter poems have been described as little cameos for their perfect and clear cut form. But Landor's greatest service to literature is his prose as exemplified by his *Imaginary Conversations*. This series of a hundred and fifty dialogues represents talks between two people – occasionally more – chosen from all periods of history. Here we meet Greeks, Romans, statesmen, soldiers, literary men, famous women and others who, in well chosen words and finely finished sentences, express the author's views on a great variety of subjects. Hannibal and Marcellus, Dante and Beatrice, Queen Elizabeth (then Princess) and her sister Mary hold converse in words that contain many grand thoughts and great truths. A remarkable psychological insight is at the basis of these talks, which are seldom truly dramatic in spirit. The speeches often betray a quiet sarcasm in regard to the weaknesses of human nature. Landor had in mind the dialogues of the Greeks, but he was the first to give to such fragments of conversations a *distinctly artistic form in English*. This again is another new element in our literature. The style is cold, restrained, sometimes stiff, but there is a *classic purity* in the finely chiselled sentences that has in it something of the nature of sculpture.

The best thing is to stand above the world, the next is to stand apart from it on any side. You may attain the first; in trying to attain it, you are certain of the second.

Love is a secondary passion in those who love best, a primary in those who love least. He who is inspired by it in a high degree, is inspired by honour in a higher. It never reaches its plenitude of growth and perfection but in the most exalted minds. *(From the imaginary conversations.)*

\* See Readings in English Literature for Extract. p. 250/51.

## PERIOD VII

### THE VICTORIAN AGE

#### THE EARLY VICTORIANS

Historians: Carlyle · Macaulay. — The Great Novelists: Dickens · Thackeray. — Critics: Ruskin · Matthew Arnold. — The Pre-Raphaelite Movement.

#### INTRODUCTION

The years 1830–1832 mark the close of the first period of the nineteenth century, and the beginning of a new era, that of the Early Victorians. Hopes that had been cherished at the time of the French Revolution had not been realized. But a new growth of life made itself felt in three different directions which brought in their turn new outgrowths of literature; the rise of democracy, the organization of philanthropic schemes, and the raising of the standard of popular education, all stimulated men minds and increased the demand for literature in which the new movements would be reflected. Books and periodicals multiplied with immense rapidity. The great singers were followed by less gifted imitators. Poetry stepped back and made way for prose. The influence of the preceding poetic age made itself felt later through Keats' works. Prose advanced with giant strides, and took the form of history, philosophy, criticism of life and literature, and above all of the Victorian novel. Three men of mighty stature arose to lead men to higher ideals and each in his way to expose and castigate the social evils of the day. Carlyle, Dickens, and Thackeray.

#### HISTORIANS

**Thomas Carlyle (1795 – 1881)**

was born on his father's farm Ecclefechan, Dumfriesshire, in the south of Scotland. As a young man he was sent to Edinburgh to study and prepare for the ministry. But he gave up this plan (1817) and tried to support himself by school and private teaching, an occupation he disliked increasingly.

In the year 1821 Carlyle, who had been oppressed with doubts, experienced a great inward change which he calls his "spiritual new birth". He felt that he had freed himself from the tyranny of evil, that he was a free man, free to fight for good! And this was the keynote of his life: the Everlasting No, to the tyranny of troubles and difficulties. Carlyle now began to study French, Italian, Spanish, and German. He wrote the Life of Schiller, and translated Wilhelm Meister. In 1826 he married Jane Welsh, a fine woman, his equal in mind, and a true helpmeet for this philosopher of many moods. And at his wife's farm at Craigenputtoch, where they lived for sixteen years, Carlyle's mind reached its full growth.

In 1834 the pair went to live in London. Carlyle, who had been writing essays, literary and historical, had planned the work that was to be the turning point of his life, the History of the French Revolution. When it appeared, his reputation was made, publishers sought him, and his position as one of the first men of letters of his day was secured. The works he had already written with little recognition were now popular. Chief among these was a curious book directed against shams, hypocrisy, old-clothes, i. e. worn-out customs, etc., *Sartor Resartus*, or, the tailor retailored. By it Carlyle preached that inner worth and ideals truths were alone worth striving after. He now did some writing for periodicals, and delivered lectures in London, which were printed as *Heroes and Hero Worship*. His next work, *Past and Present*, dealt with the social evils of the time. Three more great works, *Letters and Speeches of Cromwell*, the *Life of Sterling*, and above all the *Life of Frederick the Great* (finished in 1865) placed Carlyle at the head of the prose literature of his time. Honours of various kinds were showered on him; but his wife's death came in the midst of his renown. He wrote little more after this, and lived very quietly till his death in 1881.

All Carlyle's work shows great concentration of aim. He learned much from the Germans, whose thoroughness he appreciated. And they in their turn, together with the Americans, have warmly admired him. Carlyle's best literary essay was on Burns, his worst on Scott, whom he could not understand. His historical style as seen in his *French Revolution*, was new to his age, it was so vivid, sensational, even startling. But he conscientiously went to Germany to collect material for his *Frederick the Great*. His *Sartor Resartus*, which treats of all the problems of his day, contains Carlyle's gospel, that *reforms are*

*urgently needed*, and that true blessedness is found in honest work. He wrote intentionally in an eccentric un-English speech, but by it he arrested public attention. His personality was like a bleak east wind which disperses the germs of evil. By his force and originality he was the most prominent figure of his time. He was the prophet of his generation, a man with whom a sense of his duty, his mission, came first. Whatever his eccentricities were, men saw through the rough exterior, and he was, and is honoured for his earnestness and integrity of purpose.

Another historian of this time was

### Thomas Babington, Lord Macaulay (1800 – 1859).

Owing to his birth and social position life was made easy for him. He did not toil slowly up-hill to success, he sprang into fame. In this and in his attitude towards life, Macaulay was a sharp contrast to Carlyle, the man of inward spiritual conflict. For Macaulay glided along on the surface of things and ignored deep questions and hidden meanings. He was well known from the first for two qualities, his brilliant conversational gifts and his prodigious memory. The first was sometimes too overpowering. A society wit said once: "Macaulay has improved of late; I have observed in him flashes of — silence!"

Macaulay is known for his Essays, which deal, in a delightfully popular manner, in flowing rhetorical English, with biographical or historical subjects, i. e. *Milton*, *The Impeachment of Warren Hastings*, etc. Macaulay's History of England, although unfinished, is as interesting as a novel. For he held the theory that *history should resemble the Waverley Novels*. Macaulay brought the past before his readers as if it were the present. He wrote of actual events with the same warmth as a novelist who writes fiction. He completely revolutionized the writing of history, for which we owe him a great debt of gratitude. But he draws conclusions too quickly, and he was not thorough enough to be a good critic or a wise juge. Macaulay's poetry is *fine spirited English* verse, of which the *Lays of Ancient Rome* are the best example. The words exactly fit the action described, e. g. when *Horatius keeps the Bridge*. Although Macaulay has no message to the hearts of men, he raised the educational level of the middle class by his great stores of information of the most various kinds, imparted in a delightfully popular manner.

It is with this period that the *novel* begins to play a prominent part

in literature, becoming later the chief and also the most profitable form of writing. We have to deal with a few writers who are interesting as a feature of the time; but cannot be put in the first rank in point of merit. Such a one,

**Edward George Bulwer, Lord Lytton (1803 – 1873),**

was remarkable for the ease and fluency with which he wrote. He caught the "Byronic fever" which showed itself in imitations of Byron's half savage heroes. Many of his numerous novels have little literary merit, but, after a journey to Italy he produced historical romances that are attractive in a superficial way, and often charm the young reader. Such are: *The Last Days of Pompeii*, *Rienzi*, *Harold*, *The Last of the Barons*. These were followed by dramas, of which two, *The Lady of Lyons* and *Cardinal Richelieu*, are still put on the stage and produce a fine melodramatic effect. Lytton's later novels: *The Caxtons* and *My Novel*, both domestic stories, have more common sense and no theatrical glitter. They are by far his best work and make pleasant reading.

**The Brontë Sisters.**

These three daughters of a country clergyman in Yorkshire, Charlotte (1816–1855), Emily (1818–1848), and Anne (1820–1849) led a lonely and barren existence, devoid of all stimulus and opportunity for culture. But all three *possessed imagination in a marked degree*, as is seen in their poems, and still more in the novels of Emily and Charlotte. *Wuthering Heights*, Emily Brontë's only novel, shows decided genius, but is defective as a work of art. Charlotte Brontë attained a remarkable success with her well known novel, *Jane Eyre*.

This story by a young woman who knew little of society shows wonderful force and vividness of imagination. The modest, plain-faced heroine Jane has a lover both attractive and brutal, a somewhat impossible hero, but one who fits remarkably well into the situation. The story with its impassioned language, its impressive descriptions, its high lights and deep shadows, carries us along with breathless interest. It has its defects, amongst others a lack of humour. But it is written with Elizabethan force and fire, that promised much, had a longer span of life been granted the authoress<sup>1</sup>).

1) It may be needless to add that *Jane Eyre* has been dramatized in German with the title: "Die Waise von Lowood".

The other works by Currer Bell, as the author called herself, show the gentler aspects of life, e. g. *Shirley*, a domestic tale full of a yearning tenderness. The characters were all drawn from life, and so truthfully that some of the originals recognized themselves and protested.

The friend and biographer of Charlotte Brontë, Mrs. Elizabeth Gaskell, wrote stories that interested alike girls and men of the world, e. g. *Mary Barton*; *Wives and Daughters*. Her best work, *Cranford*, as a narrative of village life is not an unworthy successor of *The Vicar of Wakefield*. Her remarkably pure English and accuracy of detail remind us sometimes of Jane Austen. Mrs. Gaskell dealt with social problems of the day in a literary style that has not been adequately recognized.

### THE VICTORIAN NOVEL

#### Charles John Huffham Dickens (1812 – 1870).

Charles Dickens, the most popular novelist of the nineteenth century was born at Landport near Portsmouth. His father was a clerk in the Navy Pay Office at Portsmouth, a man always in money difficulties. He is the original of *Micawber* in *David Copperfield*, a novel largely autobiographical. Dickens' boyhood is described here with a painful accuracy in the account of poor little David and his sufferings. After living five years in Chatham the Dickens family went to London, and a year later the father was put in prison for debt. For the boy bitter experiences followed that gave him a knowledge of the London streets, of menial drudgery in a blacking warehouse, and many forms of poverty, all of which proved to be invaluable material to the future novelist.

After very insufficient schooling Dickens became first, a lawyer's clerk, then a reporter and journalist. When twenty-two, he began to write the articles for a Magazine that appeared in 1836 as "Sketches by Boz" (*Boz* = his little sister's nickname for *Moses* given to one of the Dickens boys). Here are to be found germs of some of his best characters. Although Dickens was an eager reader, he imitated no one, but was as original in his choice of sources as in his style in all he wrote; his source was: *London and its street life*.

He was the first to publish a story in monthly parts, and in this form appeared the renowned *Papers of the Pickwick Club*, completed when the author was barely twenty-five. By this inimitable piece of

fun Dickens' success was assured; and he continued to write with a rapidity almost equal to that of Scott. Dickens married in 1836, a marriage which in after years proved unhappy to both parties. His great popularity in America induced him to visit that country (1842); but his impressions recorded in *American Notes* and *Martin Chuzzlewit* with too severe a touch gave offence to the Americans. With *David Copperfield*, his finest novel, Dickens reached the climax of his fame. In 1851 he started a family journal, *Household Words*, afterwards called *All the Year Round*. His success as a writer induced him to enter on a course of public readings from his own works in his lively dramatic manner. This brought in large sums of money but proved to be a strain on his health and hastened his end. He died June 9, 1870 in his house at Gadshill near Rochester, where he had spent the last nineteen years of his life.

A proof of Dickens' popularity was seen in the sale of his works when he could write no more. In the first twelve years after his death nearly four millions of volumes were sold. The chief causes of this popularity are threefold. To begin with; Dickens came into the world of literature *at the right moment*. Most of his people belong to the Early Victorian Age, and to the classes whose social grievances were getting to be a subject of interest: the lower middle class and the very poor. Even the comic side of things, as he shows it, would especially delight people of that age for to them it came with the force of novelty.

Secondly Dickens not only made his generation laugh, but also taught them to expect to laugh at whatever he might write, a wholesome hearty laugh, such as had not been heard since the days of Goldsmith, Sheridan and Hogarth. And thirdly, his books made little demand on the intellect of his readers. People who could not always understand Scott could appreciate the genuine animal spirits that shine through *Pickwick* and other books of Dickens. And Dickens' originality made the reading of his books easy to all. He wrote of what he knew; he not only had observed closely, but he, following the method of Ben Jonson, selected people whose "humours" he could emphasize with his wonderful imagination. His vivid pictures of the poor are calculated to call forth laughter or tears. Dickens said he "*could not see why Robinson Crusoe was so popular*", because it made people neither laugh nor cry. And he tried to do both in his stories.

In his own day in England, Dickens was thought to be a master of

the pathetic as well as of the comic situation. To many Englishmen of to-day his pathos appears at times to be melodramatic. But others are deeply moved on reading the death of *Little Nell* in the Old Curiosity Shop, the best known example of Dickens' pathos. Dickens' love of exaggeration tends at times to make his pictures more realistic than real. But we cannot forget that he has helped the world to laugh; and that his keen sense of humour has made fun out of ordinary things for average readers. For this painting of his generation he is a consummate artist.

Of Dickens' works, *The Pickwick Papers* began as sketches without any intended plot, but since it pleased the public, a little plot was introduced. It is one of the most natural of Dickens' books, and the sayings of the immortal Sam Weller show a remarkable knowledge of life on the part of the young author who created him. *Nicholas Nickleby* exposes the cruelty of unscrupulous schoolmasters as seen in *Squeers of Do-the-boys Hall*. *Oliver Twist* is the pathetic history of a workhouse boy who falls into a London thieves' den. Each of these two books has a plot and a complicated story. *The Old Curiosity Shop* tells us of a confirmed and aged gambler and the little granddaughter Nell who dies. *Martin Chuzzlewit*, a story of American life, has the ridiculous figures of Sairey Gamp and Mrs. Harris. In *Bleak House* Dickens tries to draw from "high life", in which he is not so successful as in his tales of the poor. The tragic story has among its lighter features the introduction of the character of Mr. Boythorn, who personates W. S. Landor. Of Dicken's remaining novels, *The Tale of Two Cities* is based on a knowledge of Carlyle's History of the French Revolution and is not one of his best.

The books that Dickens himself preferred are, *The Christmas Carol*, in which he holds up avarice to contempt and ridicule, *The Chimes*, *The Cricket on the Hearth*, and *David Copperfield*, much of which is supplied with incidents taken from his own life. And these are the works that gained for the author his greatest popularity.

#### DAVID COPPERFIELD

the novel of which Dickens said: "I have in my heart of hearts a favourite child . . . And his name is David Copperfield." We are taken into a country village, where little David begins life in a loving mother's care and is waited on by his devoted and loyal old nurse Peggotty. The boy's outlook on life is vividly brought before us by his feeling for his surroundings, the garden and poultry yard and the view of the churchyard. By his mother's remarriage

David is at the mercy of a selfish unscrupulous step-father and has rough experiences of life. Worst of all, he is subject at school to ill-usage and cruelty in the name of authority. David's mother dies: and David becomes the errand boy to a wine merchant. He lodges with Mr. Micawber, the man "who is always waiting for something to turn up". We get various glimpses of kindly human nature in the portraits of Peggotty's fisherman brother, and a stiff but tender-hearted aunt of David's, Miss Betsy Trotwood. David goes to her in Dover when he runs away from his master. She sends David to Canterbury to school. Then he comes to know a lawyer, Mr. Wickfield, and his daughter Agnes. In the course of time David meets a former school-fellow, Steerforth, who eventually ruins the happiness of the Peggotty family by eloping with Peggotty's niece Emily. David marries a charming and helpless girl, Dora Spenlow, who dies after a short married life. A hypocritical clerk of Mr. Wickfield's, Uriah Heep, is discovered by Micawber, his secretary to have defrauded his employer. Agnes Wickfield, whom Heep nearly forced to marry him, becomes later David's wife. The Peggotty family find their happiness in Australia and are all comfortably settled.

In this book, which is the record of a whole life, Dickens approaches the form of novel-writing as seen in Thackeray's works. The tone is restrained, and the artistic treatment of the development of David from infancy to manhood has earned for this the first place in Dickens' works. It is of interest to note that Dickens first met Thackeray when the latter offered to draw the illustrations for *David Copperfield*.

And of Dickens Thackeray said, "I am grateful for the sweet unsullied pages which the author of *David Copperfield* gives to my children".

Few writers who have dealt with low life, — often the lowest depths of poverty and misery, — have yet preserved a purity of mind and a genuine compassion for those who have found life too hard for them. Dickens was a powerful influence for good in various directions of philanthropic work. He was, with Thackeray the enemy of humbugs and hypocrisy. The two greatest Victorian novelists had their chief aim in common, but the polished sarcasm of Thackeray's deliberate and classic manner did not appeal to the popular mind as did the highly-coloured pictures and comic caricatures of Dickens, the novelist of the English people. No account of Dickens can close without a mention of his great love and popularity with the young. He delighted in being a child among the children of a family living near him at Gadshill. And there are those still alive who remember being "swung in the big swing by the man who told them such lovely stories".

Contemporary with Dickens, but a novelist, of the classical manner of writing was

**William Makepeace Thackeray (1811 – 1863).**

Thackeray was born at Calcutta, where his father was in the East India Company's service. The boy was sent to England, and to the renowned school, the Charterhouse which institution as novelist he mentions in his books. He was for a year at Trinity College Cambridge, where he showed a great facility for making neatly turned verses of which a poem on Timbuctoo is a clever piece of nonsense. Later Thackeray studied art in Paris for a time, and then went on to Weimar, where he saw Goethe. On his coming of age, a small fortune was left to him, all of which he lost in trying to start a newspaper.

Then Thackeray turned to writing as a profession, supplying magazines with contributions that have since become famous, e. g. The Yellowplush Papers, The Great Hoggarty Diamond, The Book of Snobs, etc. When he was thirty-five, he began to publish in parts a novel, *Vanity Fair*. And the reading public perceived that another great novelist had appeared on the literary horizon, a genius whose talent had matured slowly, and whose work was not that of hasty youth. At intervals of about two years followed the novels: *Pendennis*, *Esmond*, and, *The Newcomes*. These three with *Vanity Fair* constitute *Thackeray's best work*. Two more, *The Virginians*, (a sequel to *Esmond*,) and, *Adventures of Philip*, point to declining power. Like Dickens, Thackeray had delivered lectures in England and America, and these he published with the titles: *Humourists of the Eighteenth Century* and, *The Four Georges*. They presented a picture of the times of which they treat, that appealed to the popular mind more successfully than a volume of average history. Thackeray was *completely at home in the Eighteenth Century, its life and literature*. His best novel, *Esmond*, is an example of this.

An unfinished story, *Dennis Duval*, in a vein of quaint, homely tenderness, quite unlike any other work of the author's, was left a fragment when Thackeray died on Christmas Eve 1863. His last twenty years had been a continuous stretch of laborious work, undertaken chiefly in order to provide proper support for his daughters. A great sorrow had weighed on this stalwart, jovial man, who was welcome everywhere for his good humour and ready wit. After a short, happy married life his wife became mentally afflicted, and the care of two little daughters was the chief interest and anxiety of the hard worked father.

Thackeray's best known work is *Vanity Fair*, a novel without a hero.

#### VANITY FAIR

The plot is laid in the early days of the Nineteenth Century, and deals with members of the professional and upper middle classes. The title is used to denote the constant struggle of each section of the community described, to emulate, in point of wealth or social position, a class of people a few grades higher than itself.

Becky Sharpe — daughter of a shabby music teacher and a stage dancer — has been brought up anyhow by her father till she succeeds in obtaining the position of pupil teacher in a first rate girls' finishing school, where she makes friends with Amelia Sedley, the only daughter of a rich merchant. School days ended, Becky accompanies Amelia to her home for a short holiday, until her future employer, Sir Pitt Crawley, shall be ready to take her down to his country seat as governess to his two daughters. Becky's adaptability and ambition nearly procure her a good "establishment" in the shape of marriage with Amelia's brother, Joshua Sedley, Member of the Indian Council and a District Judge, who is loutish and unattractive but — very rich! Becky also makes the acquaintance of the wealthy merchant Osborne, and of his son George, an admirer of the gentle Amelia. The ambition of this family is boundless, and they use their wealth in order to rise to a social prominence undreamt of by them in former years. Foiled in her matrimonial attempts at the Sedleys, Miss Sharpe uses her opportunities at Queen's Crawley to become almost indispensable to Sir Pitt, a terrible his tyrant, and to his whole family, his rich old maiden sister, and old second son, Captain Rawdon Crawley of the Guards whom Becky secretly marries. This becomes known when Sir Pitt, set free by Lady Crawley's death, offers his hand to the charmer; and then the whole family shuts its doors on her. This is the hardest blow Becky has yet endured, for she has, by her own act, cut herself off from attaining the summit of her ambition. The Waterloo Campaign shifts the scene to Belgium, where a large number of the actors in this Comedy of Vanities meet again.

George Osborne is there with his regiment, and his wife (formerly Amelia Sedley, whom, owing to old Sedley's failure, he has married much against his father's wishes); Rawdon Crawley and Rebecca (whose popularity and success are boundless); Joshua Sedley, seeking for notoriety, and aping the military dress and manners of the officers with whom he associates. The charming Mrs. Crawley has many admirers, whom she plays off one against another with the greatest skill. Even gentle Amelia Osborne has one admirer, Captain William Dobbin, an old schoolfellow of Osborne's, a great, awkward, supremely good-natured young man, the butt of school days, but later on the useful protector of the neglected wife. Osborne's departure for the seat of war is followed almost immediately by his death. Amelia returns to share her father's poverty till the birth of a son softens old Osborne's heart and brings about a reconciliation, and the little George Osborne eventually inherits his grandfather's wealth. His mother finally accepts the faithful lover of so many years, Captain Dobbin. The art

of living in the utmost luxury on "nothing a year" is illustrated in the London household of the Rawdon Crawleys, who, in spite of all Mrs. Rawdon's efforts have lost old Miss Crawley's wealth, which goes to Rawdon's elder brother and his wife. The social ambitions of Becky rise with the passing years, and success is hers until, — just before her inclusion in the highest circles — a serious quarrel with her husband leads to a separation. Thenceforth she sinks, and is for many years a disreputable frequenter of Continental gambling resorts. But the unconquerable ambition still works. We see a return to comparative prosperity, and a half toleration of the adventuress by a less exalted world, where she is admired as having mixed in society of a higher level, and where her shady past is overlooked because her former acquaintance with the bearers of great names sheds upon her a halo of glory.

This novel contains some of Thackeray's finest English, (see the chapters on the Waterloo campaign) The picture of society, and above all of the ambitious Becky Sharpe has earned for the author the name of *cynic*, but unjustly so. Thackeray tells his story, as a *critic* and a *satirist*, and therefore he must *stand aside*, and watch his characters who are *made to betray their own weaknesses and errors*. The author may interrupt the narration to comment, or to explain. He wishes to expose all shams, humbugs and false pretentions. But behind his contempt there lurks *pity* for the weak wrong-doer. He preaches, and teaches, and warns, but this very pity, which may be found by the sympathetic reader, saves Thackeray from being a cynic.

The finest of his novels but one not generally popular, is a piece of art, and not *based on satire primarily*. Esmond is the ideal man of all Thackeray's men. We meet two women of opposite types, Lady Castlewood, the only loveable one of the "good" sort, and Beatrice, worldly, beautiful, and bewitching, who compels men to serve her by sheer fascination, just as Becky did by her cleverness and crafty wiles. In Esmond the classic eighteenth century spirit pervades the whole, not only because we meet men such as Addison and Steele but because a classic restraint dominates the story and especially the carefully selected language which corresponds with the time. Thackeray was justly proud of this his most classic work. His Pendennis is partly autobiographical. His truest pathos is found in the account of the old Colonel's death in The Newcomes.

Both Dickens and Thackeray were humourists and yet with a difference. Dickens makes us laugh outright, Thackeray makes us smile appreciatively. Dickens, as artist picks out *picturesque incident* as the centre of interest. Thackeray paints on a large canvas a panoramic picture with *many series of events*. Dickens and Thackeray made the

nineteenth century novel worthy to take rank with those of Fielding and Smollett: and worthy to take its place in European literature.

## THE INTELLECTUAL MOVEMENT. CRITICISM OF ART, LITERATURE AND LIFE

### The Development of Prose.

On reaching the middle of the century we realize that prose as well as poetry has reached a standard of excellence not only in matter but in the manner of presenting the subject. The stamp of each writer is left on his work. The English of Carlyle, the polished precision of Landor, Charles Lamb's dainty style, and the pure English of Jane Austen and Thackeray, all prove the possibilities of our nineteenth century English that admits of many and unsuspected developments in the hands of the skilful artist. Literature becomes increasingly many-sided, for the new movements of the time must find expression in, and by means of it. Science has new advocates in Huxley and Darwin. — Intellectual life brings a new form of scholarship and criticism. Ecclesiastical and artistic currents which go hand in hand with poetry turn, with the hope of finding lost ideals, to mediævalism in worship and in art.

### John Ruskin (1819 – 1900)

was the first of the leaders in criticism of this time. His criticisms covered the widest field: literature, morals, art, economics, and society.

The atmosphere of his early home life was distinctly Puritan, and Ruskin was essentially a Protestant. He went as a young man to Oxford, and also travelled on the Continent with his father. Both of these experiences tended to broaden his views on life and art. He began to feel a profound reverence for Turner as an artist, and for Carlyle as a teacher. In 1843 Ruskin published the first volume of *Modern Painters*, (finished 1860). For its time the work was daringly original. The author opposed all the established theories of art. The search after truth drew him to the Pre-Raphaelite School. In 1849 followed the *Seven Lamps of Architecture*, and in 1851–53 his greatest work *The Stones of Venice*.

Ruskin became *Slade Professor of Fine Art* at Oxford (1869), when his reputation was almost at its height. He undertook this work in a spirit of the greatest seriousness. He taught the *spiritual significance of art*, and also that beauty was the satisfaction of a spiritual want.

These views he made known in a number of smaller publications, extending his criticisms as well to economic and social subjects. To his later works belong *Unto this Last*, *Sesame and Lilies*, and others.

A certain over-confidence marks his criticisms, arising from the fulness of his knowledge. In his poetic prose he follows De Quincey rather than Goldsmith, for the correct and polished prose of the eighteenth century does not appeal to the emotions.

When writing on social conditions Ruskin disregards unalterable facts, e. g. railways and other modern inventions; and he is both too visionary and too arbitrary to be able to reform England, which was his chief aim. Even if his principles will not work, he called attention to many defects of the time. To us it is a permanent gain that his enthusiasm expressed itself in his poetic and romantic prose, for he proved that *prose could share the melody and rhythm of poetry*.

### Matthew Arnold (1822 – 1888)

was the son of the famous Dr. Thomas Arnold, Head Master of Rugby. He went from Rugby to Oxford and became, before he was thirty, *Inspector of Schools*.

While he held this post, Matthew Arnold travelled to France and Germany to study foreign systems of education. For ten years he was Professor of Poetry at Oxford. Two visits he paid to America, and wrote of them his *Discourses in America*. In this manner did he develop both as poet and critic. He is distinguished as being equally famous in poetry and prose. While Professor of Poetry Arnold published a volume of poems containing *Tristram and Iseult*, the old Celtic story told in various metres. But the best part of it is in the rhymed heroic couplet. It is an exception to Arnold's work in that it is pervaded by the *Romantic spirit*. The figures of *Merlin*, *Tristram* and *Iseult* are drawn with a Pre-Raphaelite distinctness. It is superior as a work of art to his other longer poems, e. g. *Sohrab and Rustum*, and, *Balder Dead*.

Of his shorter poems three stand out from the rest for their excellence. *Requiescat* is a union of pathos, simplicity, and grace. The love of the sea inspired Arnold as did the stars Dante. His poem of *The Forsaken Merman*, often praised, is inferior to the lines on *Dover Beach*. Here a marvellous pictorial effect is conveyed to us "in a vowel and consonant music". But the *Sonnet to Shakespeare* has the first place among his short poems.

Matthew Arnold's criticisms dealt with, — *literature, theology and society*. His theory was, that — the *study of the classics*, and a *knowledge of the best thought of all nations and all ages constitute culture*. And for England, with its fervent temperament, and romantic tendencies, an acquaintance with French criticism, — objective and logical, was essential. Of his own extensive culture Matthew Arnold's two volumes of Essays in Criticism bear witness. It is not a case of mere reviewing, but a survey of a many-sided historical and literary nature. The Essay on the Study of Celtic Literature is an example of his charm of style, over which flashes of irony and humour play like summer lightning. In *theology* Arnold was Greek and pagan rather than modern and English, e. g. in Literature and Dogma. More than for his learning we go to Matthew Arnold for *style*, for the *new critical attitude*, the appreciation of *literary beauty in and for itself*, the power of handling English so as to make it *radiate charm*. A writer who bears some traces of his influence is

### William Morris (1834 – 1896)

who was in turn poet, prophet to the Socialists and a reformer of domestic art. His earliest poems point to the influence of Tennyson and Rossetti, e. g. the Defence of Guinevere, and The Life and Death of Jason. His greatest work is The Earthly Paradise, a collection of poems in which twelve mediæval alternate with twelve classical legends. The refrain of the first few verses is the oft quoted line:

“The idle singer of an empty day.”

Morris was full of the Romantic spirit that turned to mediævalism for inspiration, and he hoped thereby to revive the ideals of an early age. On the other hand he aimed at culture in a classical sense, for he translated the *Æneid* and the *Odyssey*. He also tried to make the English people familiar with *Icelandic poetry*. His verse is smooth and flows easily, but he wrote dispassionately and without warmth of feeling. He took Chaucer as his model, but he never succeeded in learning from this great master the *true art of and the spirit essential to narrative poetry*.

The Ecclesiastical Movement which originated in Oxford also took for its ideals the earlier forms of worship and the spiritual movements of a past age. To this we owe one of our most beautiful of modern hymns. *Lead Kindly Light*, by John Henry Newman of Oxford.

The fulness of literary life and the abundance of works in both poetry and prose, has an almost Elizabethan character. Tennyson and the two Brownings had begun to write earlier than this, but the fame of these three belong to a later time.

The translation of the Persian poem, the *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam* by Edward Fitzgerald was an achievement in verse that ranks in dignity and literary value as an original. The peculiar melody of the rhythm introduced a new quality to English verse which influenced other poets.

In prose Walter Pater (1865–94), a retiring Oxford scholar (who was deeply impressed by his reading of Gœthe, Winkelmann, and Novalis), wrote in a classical prose which had, as its basis, thorough scholarship and concentrated toil. He was little recognized at the time, for a form of paganism was the keynote of his chief work *Marius the Epicurean*. But his longing for ideal beauty showed Ruskin's influence, and found a sympathetic admirer in Swinburne. His fame increased rapidly after his death.

The love of beauty and the return to mediæval ideals reached a definite climax in art by the founding of the

### PRE-RAPHAELITE BROTHERHOOD OF ARTISTS

These returned to art as it was before the days of Raphael. They protested against the invasion of art by *science* or *intellect*. Ruskin was at first one of them. Their leader was both poet and painter:

#### Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1828 – 1882).

Although born in England, he was of Italian descent and grew up in a semi-Italian atmosphere. The Pre-Raphaelite paper *The Germ* published some of his earliest literary attempts.

Before he was nineteen Rossetti had written a poem for which he is still famous; *The Blessed Damozel*. It is permeated by a spiritual, atmospheric beauty that defies definition. The six-line stanza tells of the *Blessed Damozel* waiting for her lover.

"It was the terrace of God's house  
That she was standing on,  
By God built over the sheer depth  
In which Space is begun;  
So high, that looking downward thence,  
She scarce could see the sun."

The aerial, intangible nature of the imaginative grasp in the poem places it among those that may be said to awaken "thoughts that lie too deep for tears".

Rossetti's wife, a girl of a peculiar type of beauty often seen in his pictures, died in 1862 after two years of happy married life. In his first grief he had all his manuscript poems buried with her in her coffin. Seven years later they were recovered and published in 1870 as *Poems*. For a long time he wrote little, but there at last appeared *The King's Tragedy*, and poems published as *Ballads and Sonnets*. The first of these was of a different order to Rossetti's other works. He describes the heroic devotion of the maid of honour to *Jane Beaufort* the queen of James I. of Scotland, (the author of *The King's Quhair*, see fifteenth century). Catharine's brave deed and the tragic fate of the King are told in words full of fire and pathos.

For pure romance of the mediæval quality Rossetti's literary ancestry goes back to *Keats* and *Chatterton*. He had the same fervour of temperament as *Dante* his namesake, the same richness of imagination, and lofty flights of fancy. And of him, too, it might be said:

"Like flame within the naked hand  
His body bore his burning heart."

Rossetti's influence on English and American poetry was widespread. The glow and richness of colour in his sonnets provoked an attack on him in England. There is at times an over elaboration, — quite a Pre-Raphaelite quality — so that the deeper meaning is buried "under a wealth of sonorous words". It has been said that "Rossetti should have written his pictures and painted his sonnets!" A comparison of the two is of great interest to the student of literature. Rossetti's sister,

### Christina G. Rossetti (1830 – 1894),

had a large share of her brother's poetic endowments. Her life was very secluded, due chiefly to her ill-health and a fervent religious, nun-like, disposition. Hence the devotional, often melancholy tone in many of her lyrics.

Yet she had a great love for and a comprehension of Keats. And a fine touch and delicate taste for the fairy world is evident in her best known poem, *Goblin Market*, a quaint, humorous conception. Her short lyrics are of the romantic order. Among these *A Birthday* has a richness and sweetness, but withal a simplicity which is peculiar to her. Besides her poems *The Prince's Progress*, and a book of

nursery rhymes *Sing-Song*, she published with the title *Monna Innominata* a series of sonnets which have been compared with E. B. Browning's *Sonnets from the Portuguese*. Miss Rossetti's are more perfect as an *artistic conception*, but they have not the advantage of Mrs. Browning's which record a love actually felt —, a real experience. Yet modern criticism has given Christina Rossetti an increasingly high rank, placing her first among women poets as a pure artist who writes with ease, clearness and simplicity.

## THE MID-VICTORIAN AGE OR THE AGE OF TENNYSON

The psychological Novel: George Eliot . Popular Novelists. — The greater Victorian Poets: Tennyson, Elizabeth and Robert Browning. — The many-sided Development of Prose: History, Philosophy, Science.

### THE PSYCHOLOGICAL NOVEL

#### George Eliot (1819 – 1880).

The tendency of modern criticism to form a habit of analysing, of searching for causes and motives, now appears as a leading feature in fiction. Hence arises the psychological novel with which George Eliot's name is connected.

Miss *Mary Ann Evans*, as she was in reality, was the daughter of a Warwickshire estate-agent, and her early life was spent among simple folk of the lower-middle class of country people who then still retained old fashioned ways and forms of speech of which very few traces are now left. Mary Ann early lost her mother, and kept house for her father whom she loved devotedly. Her strenuous efforts to educate herself were encouraged by a family she became acquainted with who were great admirers of the German language and philosophy. Influenced by these people the whole bent of her mind was no longer Puritan as it had been, but of the opposite extreme —, that of free thinking. Her first literary effort was the translation of *Strauss' Leben Jesu* (publ. 1846). Mr. Evans died three years later, and the bereaved daughter went abroad to find comfort in arduous study.

In 1851 *The Westminster Review* did her, — a *woman* — the honour of offering her the assistant editorship of that journal! It was the crisis of her life as a woman and as an author. Many essays from her pen appeared in the *Review*. This led to her becoming acquainted with *George Henry Lewes*, a man of great perception, who at once recognized

Miss Evans' genius. Instigated and encouraged by this friend she made her first definite attempt at fiction in the shape of stories entitled *Scenes of Clerical Life*. Mr. Lewes thenceforth directed the literary career of this author now known as George Eliot who devoted herself to the guiding of his house and his children, left motherless.

These friends both pursued philosophic studies with ardour. This hunger for knowledge and for loading her mind with all forms of learning proved to be a serious defect. George Eliot's first works which showed unmistakeable signs of artistic talent of a very high order were, in her later life, increasingly marked by the defect of unnecessary stores of learning. The artist began to disappear behind the pedant, the accumulator of wisdom which did not heighten, but detracted from the literary value of her last works.

After Mr. Lewes' died (1878) "George Eliot" married Mr. J. W. Cross (1880), a union which was ended after a few months by her death.

**The Characteristics of George Eliot's novels.** The author of the first psychological novels of the Victorian Age belongs to a type quite different from those novelists whom we have discussed, Dickens, and Thackeray. While these by no means ignored the motives of the chief actors in their stories, none before George Eliot had concentrated their efforts on the *deeper* and hidden motives, the inward conflicts, the agonizing struggles that underlie the actions of human beings of, apparently, no heroic mould. She exalts the claims of Duty with such terrible earnestness that a sense of being face to face with some of the great problems of Destiny fills us with a certain awe after reading some of her works. She has been charged with pessimism. George Eliot's own reply to this was that she claimed to be, not an optimist, but a *meliorist*, one who hopes, but not too confidently for better things.

*A fund of humour* can be found in her scenes laid among the lower middle class of the country, or of the provincial town, — their weaknesses, their little absurdities and prejudices. But the nobility of the author's mind, her sympathetic insight, enlarges our own minds and draws out our sympathies.

*Her drawing of Character* is essentially truthful. George Eliot has been accused of a bald realism that leaves an unpleasant impression. The world as she sees it often seems very uninviting. But George Eliot avoided exaggeration employed for the sake of picturesque effect. Much of her work is *autobiographical* and is a faithful picture adapted from

her own life and reminiscences. George Eliot's novels can be placed in three groups as follows\*.

	Title	Written		Title	Written
I	Scenes of Clerical Life . . .	1857		III	Middlemarch . . . . 1871—72
	Adam Bede . . . . .	1859		Daniel Deronda . . . . 1876	
	The Mill on the Floss . . . .	1860		Theophrastus Such . . . 1879	
	Silas Marner . . . . .	1861			Chief Poems
II	Romola . . . . .	1863		The Spanish Gypsy } Longer 1868	
	Felix Holt . . . . .	1866		The Legend of Jubal } poems 1874	
				O may I join the choir invisible } short Sweet evenings come and go } poems	

Each of the three groups just shown has been admired in its way. The palm of excellence for *artistic work* has been given by the best critics to Group I. The Scenes of Clerical Life consist of three pathetic tales of every day life as it was fifty years before the author's time. They are told simply, without effort, with these titles: 1. *The sad Fortunes of the Rev. Amos Barton*. 2. *Mr. Gilfil's Love Story*. 3. *Janet's Repentance*. The reading public was taken by storm and decided that only a man could write so well!

Adam Bede is a story of village life in which the extremes of saintliness and crime meet. The saint, Dinah Morris, is said to be drawn from the author's aunt. Adam, the sturdy workman, an ideal such as Carlyle loved, is none other than Mr. Evans the author's father.

The Mill on the Floss is the most autobiographical of all the novels. Maggie Tulliver, a full-blooded, high-spirited girl with an introspective mind is George Eliot herself. This is especially the case when Maggie and her brother play together. In the sad end of this life-loving young thing we find the keynote of George Eliot's best work. That of a profound sympathy with all such as fail in life because they are placed in circumstances that give them no chance of happiness or success. *And she appeals for pity and help towards those whose powers never attain fulfilment from lack of opportunity.*

The same sympathetic attitude is seen in the best novel of this group, the "most beautiful of prose idylls",

Silas Marner, a tale of a poor and timid linen weaver. But in his case happiness comes in the end, and this simple-minded soul, who

\* *The best, and most representative work of the group, is printed large.*

once lost his hoard of gold, finds another in the love of a little child. This purely artistic group is followed by a second of the *transition* order best represented by *Romola*. This story was the author's favourite of all her works because it cost her the greatest effort, the mastering of the times of Savonarola. The learning displayed detracts from the artistic charm which is no longer supreme.

In the third group learning becomes too prominent in the end. But in the complex story of *Middlemarch* learning blends well with one of the four groups of people that inhabit a country neighbourhood. The tie in Thackeray's works of the panoramic order is mainly *relationship*. Here in George Eliot's novel it is *locality*. The chief, and often absorbing figure, is that of a well-born girl who craves for mental expansion and human sympathy. *Dorothea Brooke* is one of the best drawn of all the unusually well-drawn women of George Eliot's works. No writer knew so well the inner recesses of a woman's heart. George Eliot's poems reveal her thoughtful mind, but cannot be ranked with poetry of a high order.

George Eliot "was the last of the race of giants in fiction". Her reputation, when at its height, was second only to that of Dickens.

A great feature of this day was the abundance of works offered by novelists who might be called good without the stamp of greatness; such a one

### Charles Kingsley (1819 – 1875)

was a large minded, warm-hearted clergyman who wrote excellent prose, and also poetry of a really high order. He was a friend of the people, and an advocate of their cause, but his chief socialist work, the novel, *Alton Locke*, was not a literary success, and failed to help the poor. His best novel *Westward Ho!* gives a graphic picture of the state of West Devon in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, and the days of the Spanish Armada (1588). In *Hereward the Wake* we are taken to the early times when the Saxon fought for his rights in the marshy fenland of the east of England. *The Water Babies* is a story for young and old in which a vein of satire underlies a playfully told fairy tale.

Kingsley's poems were few in number. Of these the shorter lyrics have a poetic quality, a melodiousness that, had there been more of them, would have ranked Kingsley among the great poets; e. g. *When all the World is young, lad. Be good, sweet child, be good etc.* and above all, *The Sands of Dee*.

The Saint's Tragedy, an immature drama has for its subject St. Elizabeth of Thuringia who is, however, less favorably represented than is usual in German tradition. Kingsley's work is very varied, including sermons and lectures. In his life-time his winning personality made him exceedingly popular. Of his works his lyrics will rank highest.

Both Kingsley and

### Charles Reade (1814 – 1884)

made an effort to benefit society. They belonged to the class of *philanthropic writers* who wrote for a cause. Reade was by far the most gifted writer among the men of the time. He hoped to succeed as a dramatist, but fortunately took up fiction. His novel Peg Woffington is a racy story of Pope's day. Equally good are: Christie Johnstone, and, It is Never Too Late to Mend. The latter deals with prison reform. Reade studied social evils with great seriousness and stands next to Dickens in his effort to remedy wrongs.

### Anthony Trollope (1815 – 1882),

wrote for a less serious reason, viz: to supply the increasing demand for *exciting, diverting fiction*. His Barchester Group of novels contains his best work. His pleasant literary style is seen also in his excellent monograph on Thackeray.

## THE GREATER VICTORIAN POETS

When the great poets of the Romantic school had passed away, "the field (of poetry) was for the time in possession of a band of minor poets". Greatness passed on to the realms of prose; Carlyle, Dickens and Thackeray were the leading literary figures. One or two young poets were making their first attempts in the years that followed Scott's death. But the day was not far off when they too would prove to be worthy descendants of Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley and above all of Keats.

### Alfred Tennyson (1809 – 1892),

was the son of a country clergyman in Lincolnshire. When at Cambridge he won the prize for the poem on Timbuctoo for which W. M. Thackeray had competed. Three volumes of early poems, in one of which his poet brother collaborated had made no impression on the public. In 1842 a collection of poems, containing many previously published, although severely criticized in the Quarterly Review, proved

to be *the first step to fame*. The verse had some of the qualities that belonged to all that Tennyson wrote; it was sweet, graceful, melodious. Several of these poems have since taken their place among his best works; e. g. *The May Queen*, beloved by young readers of two generations for its personal note and simple pathos: "You must wake and call me early, call me early, Mother dear!" *The Lotos Eaters* with its wonderful rhythm singularly appropriate to the subject — the drifting on water:

"How sweet it were hearing the downward stream  
With half shut eyes ever to seem  
Falling asleep in a half dream" etc.

This and *Locksley Hall* written in couplets that haunt the memory are to-day classed with Tennyson's finest work.

In the year 1850 Wordsworth died and Tennyson succeeded him as Poet Laureate. In this year too he married, an event that brought him ideal happiness. With his wife he eventually settled in the Isle of Wight and lived a retired life, absorbed in his art. In 1884 Tennyson was made a peer and known henceforth as Lord Tennyson.

The great number of poems that he wrote during his long life may be classed as *lyric*, *narrative* and *dramatic*. His work, when he reached middle-age, increased in depth of feeling, and in fervour of impassioned expression. His favourite form was the lyric. The subjects he chose were of the widest range, e. g. *ideal love*; *problems of life*, including the signs of the times; *philosophical speculation*, and *national* and *patriotic sentiment*. Among his longer poems are the following: *Enoch Arden*, and *The Princess*, narrations in blank verse.

#### ENOCH ARDEN

a rough sailor's lad was one of three children who lived "a hundred years ago" in a remote little English seaport. Enoch and Philip loved the little damsel Annie, and Enoch won and wed her. But times were hard, and Enoch had to leave her that he might the better support her and their two children. He went as one of the crew of a ship bound for China. Years passed by and no sign of Enoch. He had been shipwrecked and left alone on a tropical island. At length, when his hair was grey, a chance vessel rescued him and bore him homewards. He landed with a beating heart and went shyly up to his wife's house. He saw her as Philip's wife, and they did not know him. Then his stout heart broke, and, after confiding his story to one of his old neighbours, this "strong heroic soul" passed away.

#### THE PRINCESS: A MEDLEY

The heroine, Princess Ida, prefers study to a marriage arranged for her. She founds a university where teachers and students must be women. Her

suitors and two friends disguised obtain admission as females but betray themselves by singing at a picnic. They are forthwith ejected, but Ida who falls into a river is saved by the Prince, her lover. War breaks out and the college becomes a hospital in which Ida nurses the wounded Prince. She falls in love with him and all ends happily. The blank verse of the poem is varied by lyrics of great sweetness. The subject here treated of, — woman's education and mental expansion — was about to become a burning question in England. Tennyson hereby proved that he was the poet in whom the feeling of the times found a definite expression. This it was that made him in the course of many years the national poet of his country.

*In Memoriam* (1850) is a collection of elegies in honour of his dearest friend who died young. The poem, which was not completed for seventeen years is disconnected and lacking in construction. But the stanza of four lines — of which the first and fourth rhyme — has an exquisite melody and rhythm. In it great problems are discussed, such as these:

"So runs my dream, but what am I?  
An infant crying in the night:  
An infant crying for the light:  
And with no language but a cry."

The popular mind which overlooked the deep philosophical strain that underlies the whole, remembered the poem best by the oft quoted lines:

"Ring out the old, ring in the new,  
Ring, happy bells, across the snow:  
The year is going, let him go;  
Ring out the false, ring in the true."

After 1850 appeared several *patriotic* poems viz, *The Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington* (1852) and *The Charge of the Light Brigade* (1854) founded on an episode of the Anglo Russian war. No Englishman would forget the ring of the short sharp lines that tell how

"Half a league, half a league,  
Half a league onward,  
All in the valley of Death  
Rode the six hundred."

By seizing the opportunity when national feeling ran high Tennyson gained a hold on the hearts of the English.

A violent but short reaction came when a volume containing the Monodrama *Maud* appeared (1855). The story of the poem failed to please, but in the lines beginning, *Come into the garden Maud* we find a fulness of fragrance and beauty that shows the influence of Keats on Tennyson. He surpasses Wordsworth in his intimate knowledge of nature's moods. The bloom of the rose, and the perfume of the early

morn, the "silence that fell with the waking bird" and "the hush with the setting moon" all this is brought home to us in melodious verse of great beauty. In such lines Tennyson excelled.

The Idylls of the King had begun to appear (1852) as different stories told in blank verse of King Arthur and his knights. In a manner quite his own Tennyson handles the old legend that shows the triumph of soul over sense. In the later theme of finding the Holy Grail he more nearly approaches the old Celtic spirit. The work greatly increased his popularity.

In his old age Tennyson, still desirous of adding to the glory of England, began to write dramas based on English history. He had little success at first. The two dramas, Queen Mary, and Harold, contain some fine passages, but the first and only one that had any success on the stage was the tragedy of Thomas à Becket. This was partially due to the skillful stage management of the actor Henry Irving who played the part of Becket, that tragic figure of the twelfth century who stood half way between Church and State. The closing scene, the murder of Becket is deeply impressive.

How Tennyson will be ranked among poets by posterity we cannot say. His day is passing and the glory fading. He has been charged with an excessive sweetness and monotony in his verse. But he was *the expression of his time* and responded to the needs and to the taste of the English of that day. For this he might well be called, *the people's laureate*.

For a true understanding of Tennyson's power of observing nature one needs to be well acquainted with pastoral landscape, and also the sea-coast. Other poets have sung of the "stormy sea", etc. but Tennyson had an intimate knowledge of which we find the best example in the second verse of his last poem, Crossing the Bar:

*"But such a tide as moving seems asleep,  
Too full for sound and foam."*

The last years of Tennyson were spent in his house Aldworth built for him, near Hazlemere, Surrey. Here, on the night of October 6, 1892, in the light of the full moon, the aged poet crossed the bar to "see his Pilot face to face"

#### CROSSING THE BAR

Sunset and evening star,  
And one clear call for me!  
And may there be no moaning of  
the bar,  
When I put out to sea,

But such a tide as moving seems asleep,  
Too full for sound and foam,  
When that which drew from out the  
boundless deep  
Turns again home.

Twilight and evening bell,  
And after that the dark!  
And may there be no sadness of  
farewell,  
When I embark;

For though from out our bourne of  
Time and Place  
The flood may bear me far,  
I hope to see my Pilot face to face  
When I have crossed the bar.

About the time that Tennyson's first poetic efforts were offered to a public that found little to admire in them

### Elizabeth Barrett (1806 – 1864)

published her first volume of poems (1825). This was twenty years before she made her mark as a poetess, beloved for her lyrics, and her poetic personality. She began the study of Greek as well as the habit of writing poems at a very early age, and her intellectual mind continued to maintain its high level in spite of severe ill-health in after years.

When Miss Barrett was about thirty-five she was deeply impressed by a report on mines and factories, and the children employed in them. Her tender heart was filled with indignation at any form of oppression, and she now appealed to the public by the pathetic poem: *The Cry of the Children*:

“Do ye hear the children weeping, O my brothers,  
Ere the sorrow comes with years?”

Two volumes of Elizabeth Barrett's poems, one of the latter entitled *Lady Geraldine's Courtship*, were the result of three more years of writing. Four years more of constant intellectual occupation brought her life to a crisis. A friendship formed with a rising poet, Robert Browning resulted in their marriage, Septbr. 12, 1846. For a year and a half the lovers had exchanged letters which have since been published. They bear witness to the bond of sympathy existing between two of the most interesting personalities in nineteenth century literary life.

Mr. and Mrs. Browning travelled almost immediately to Italy, and, a year later, made their home in Florence. The fifteen years spent there had a marked influence on the works of both. Mrs. Browning became the champion of liberty for Italy, and both poets endeared themselves to the Italians and to English residents abroad. Their perfect married life was ended by Mrs. Browning's death in 1861 (June 29).

Mrs. Browning is best known by some of her lyrics; by a long poem, *Aurora Leigh*; and above all by a series of *Sonnets from the Portuguese*. The keynote of her style is sincerity. Her naturally tempestuous feelings often took the form of loose, wild verses that

"sobbed and wailed with a human stress". Mr. Browning described his wife as, "all a wonder and a wild desire."

This child of the Romantic School shared Wordsworth's sympathy for all forms of suffering, and Keats' love of beauty, but with the defect of a too frequent diffuseness. Some of her best lyrics have the combined qualities of a melodious, impassioned language restrained by a poetic form. Such are: *The Cry of the Children*; *The Lay of the Brown Rosary*; *The Soul's Expression*; *The Rhyme of the Duchess May*, with a quaint, old-time refrain:

"Oh, the little birds sang east, and the little birds sang west, —  
*Toll slowly.*

And I smiled to think God's greatness flowed around our  
incompleteness

Round our restlessness, His rest."

Her poem of *Aurora Leigh* is a passionate protest against an unjust judgment of woman. The piteous story is in blank verse which rushes on like a torrent that is frequently more violent than clear. Mrs. Browning's Sonnets from the Portuguese are by far her finest work. They record in a most poetic verse-form her absorbing love for her husband which glows in every line; (see Sonnet XLIII).

"How do I love thee? Let me count the ways", etc. In point of excellence they rank as the best series of sonnets on love written by an Englishwoman.

When Mrs. Browning died, Italy, and Florence in particular, mourned her. This city had affixed on her house, Casa Guidi, a tablet expressing admiration and gratitude for her who had written the poem *Casa Guidi Windows* on behalf of liberty for Italy.

### Robert Browning (1812 – 1889).

Robert Browning came of a well-educated middle class family who lived in an unromantic suburb of London, Camberwell. But the boy's mind made for itself a dream world of beauty in which the crowning glory was a laburnam tree in his garden. Here the song-birds were to him messengers from the poets he loved best, Shelley and Keats.

He received no university education, but, under the direction of his father and other teachers Browning acquired a vast store of many-sided knowledge to fit him for life. His romantic spirit was strongly influenced by the works of Byron, Shelley and Keats, and he too passed through a phase of spiritual revolt. At the age of twenty Robert Browning published his first poem, *Pauline, a Fragment*. And thus began his

literary career that lasted over fifty years. The first poem to make Browning famous was *Paracelsus*, a dramatic dialogue between the unappreciated scholar of mediæval times and his friend. The dramas now attempted by Browning were unsuccessful on the stage; e. g. *Strafford*, *The Blot in the Scutcheon*. The poem known to be the most obscure, the hardest to understand, *Sordello*, *the history of a soul*, belongs also to this early period. And several beautiful lyrics, as well as a stirring account of, *How they brought the Good News from Ghent to Aix*. In the metre we hear the tramp of the horses' hoofs in their furious gallop. But the most important poem for Browning's reputation was *Pippa Passes*, for it was in the poetic form in which he excelled and for which he became known, the *dramatic lyric*. Many of Browning's best known poems took this form, or one very similar that of the "dramatic romance".

After Browning married (in 1846) and went to live in Italy he became interested for a time in sculpture at which he worked with zeal. The romantic influences of his early youth had been succeeded by a *philosophic bent*, a *tendency to analyse*, to probe deep into human nature. One of his favourite themes reminds us of George Eliot: that of the man who strives, but is defeated by the difficulties of practical life. On being asked if he cared for *nature* Browning replied, "yes, but for *human nature* much more". He chose unusual titles for his poems. In 1848 appeared a collection: *Bells and Pomegranates*; in 1853, *Men and Women*, and other poems. After Mrs. Browning's death in 1861 Robert Browning and his son returned to England. His boy's education would naturally be henceforth the poet's great interest in life. But he also began to produce some of his best works, e. g. a collection of poems under the name of *Dramatis Personæ*. In 1868 Browning's masterpiece, *the Ring and the Book* was published. He was now called a great poet. A number of poems followed, too many to mention separately. They were chiefly *lyrics*, or short *dramatic monologues*, or narratives. Towards the close of his life there was a decline in power, but at the last, a collection entitled *Asolando* showed a return of poetic force and fire. It was published in London the day that Browning died in Venice, December 12, 1889. When Browning was laid to rest in the Poet's Corner, Westminster Abbey, his wife's lines on *Sleep* were set to music, and sung for the first time.

## Browning's masterpiece

## THE RING AND THE BOOK.

The poet found at a bookstall in Florence a little square yellow book recording a murder case of 1698. He took this fact as goldsmiths take gold, the *pure metal*, and with the alloy of poetic fancy he made a *ring* of statements. Each of these represents the point of view of one of ten people who are concerned directly or indirectly with the murder. Thus we see a *fact reflected in the minds of ten people*, a close analysis of truth, very characteristic of Browning.

## PIPPA PASSES

(A Dramatic Lyric).

The young girl Pippa, a worker in the silk mills of Asolo, has only one holiday in the year, New Year's Day, and on this one day she must see all she can. She sets forth in the early morning singing for very gladness, and, in passing the houses of the great is witness of four dramatic incidents in which her childlike song plays a part. In the morning she sees a wedded pair who have wealth but lack love; and the secret hate of one of them who is plotting murder. Then Pippa sings: "God's in his heaven; all's well with the world"; the conscience of the would-be murderer is awakened, and the crime averted. At noon Pippa sees a man about to marry a woman he loves, but on finding that she only wanted his money, he thinks of paying her off to go. But when Pippa sings: "Give her but the least excuse to love me", he decides to try and awaken the woman's heart. In the evening a mother who loves her son finds out that the latter is planning to kill the king. Pippa's song, "No need the king should ever die" checks him. He flies and escapes the police who come for him. And at night, Pippa sees two men, dedicated to the religious life, but one is arranging for the murder of Pippa because the property he is enjoying is hers by right "Suddenly God took me", sings Pippa. The priest is startled and repents. She has acted the part of conscience four times that day, and so proves that our smallest acts have important results, for good or ill, on our fellow men.

Browning's theory of life was that "not *failure*, but *low aim* is crime". True aspiration apart from success exalts a man. "Tis not what man *does*, but what he *would do*" that we should esteem. This is seen in

## ABT VOGLER (Dramatis Personæ).

This composer (born 1749 at Würzburg) first went through trials and failure, before he attained to fame. In the poem he has a theory that music could be built up into a spiritual palace of sound. But his palace vanishes. Yet it had reached to heaven, and like all true aspiration it will meet with its reward in the future. "All we have willed or hoped or dreamed of good shall exist:

"The high that proved too high, the heroic for earth too hard,  
The passion that left the ground to lose itself in the sky,  
Are music sent up to God by the lover and the bard;  
Enough that he heard it once: we shall hear it by-and-by."

Much has been said of Browning's "obscurity" of style which is at its worst in *Sordello*. The poet wished to avoid the sweet verse of his time and in so doing he went to the opposite extreme in telling of the *history of a soul*, of *Sordello*, a troubadour whom Dante mentions.

The difficulty of his style is due to the too great rapidity of thought. The poet leaps from one idea to the next omitting the little words that are the necessary links.

A reader who is new to Browning may learn to understand him by beginning with the easier poems, e. g. *The Pied Piper of Hamelin*. *O, to be in England when April's there*, which shows an intimate knowledge of nature. *Pictor Ignotus*, the unknown painter. Why care for fame? says the poet.

"O youth men praise so, holds their praise its worth?  
Blown harshly keeps the trump its golden cry?  
Tastes sweet the water with such specks of earth?"

*The boy and the Angel*, and the best of the shorter dramatic poems: *My Last Duchess*. In the words of the Duke who is showing his late wife's portrait to a stranger we see the selfish egotism of the man, and the gentle high-bred wife whom he has lost, but is also very anxious to replace. To marry again, and well!

Browning was no dramatist for the stage. The dramatic monologue shows us his dramatic mind and power of analysis. He studied human nature that he might help others. Tennyson was a patriotic Englishman. Browning was that, and more: *one of the great brotherhood of men*. In his manly, virile verse he tried to cheer on those who were burdened and to fill them with hope. For "life's no blank or blot for us: it means intensely, *and means good!*" His last words shew him best as man and poet.

#### EPILOGUE TO ASOLANDO

One who never turned his back but marched breast forward,  
Never doubted clouds would break,  
Never dreamed, though right were worsted, wrong would triumph,  
Held we fall to rise, are baffled to fight better,  
Sleep to wake.

No, at noonday in the bustle of man's work-time  
Greet the unseen with a cheer!  
Bid him forward, breast and back as either should be,  
"Strive and thrive!" cry "Speed, — fight on, fare ever  
There as here!"

#### Prose in History and Science.

History which was well represented by Carlyle and Macaulay in the Early Victorian Age had no lack of great names in the Mid-Victorian

Age, which proves the amount of learning brought to bear on the study of the past.

James Anthony Froude (1818–1894) of Oxford wrote a History of England from the Fall of Wolsey to the Destruction of the Spanish Armada. This great work of twelve volumes was written in a literary style of great charm, in which imagination did not always keep strictly to truth. It was welcomed with great warmth by the public. Froude's Life and Letters of Carlyle to whom he was deeply indebted raised a storm of controversy. Letters recently published (1909) by a relative of Carlyle have proved the injustice of Froude's attitude in regard to Carlyle's treatment of his wife. Froude's bitterest enemy throughout his life was Edward Augustus Freeman (1823–92) who wrote a History of the Norman Conquest. His breadth of view is remarkable; he saw history like a great map unrolled before him. But his style lacks the charm of Froude's work. On the other hand he can be relied on for the accuracy of his statements. John Richard Green (1837–1883) was the first historian with a poet's vision. His Short History of the English People (publ. 1874) was as warmly welcomed as many a famous novel. John Robert Seeley (1834–1895), Professor of History at Cambridge published in book form his lectures on The Expansion of England. By this he became the founder of the theory of Imperialism. Two more names may be added to the foregoing: William Stubbs who wrote The Constitutional History of England, and Samuel Rawson Gardiner, the historian of the Puritans. In Science, one of the leaders of modern thought, Herbert Spencer (1820–1903) charmed the literary world by his essays written in a pleasing style. In his Principles of Psychology (1855) he foresaw Darwin's theory of evolution. John Tyndall (1820–1893) wrote of physics in a style like that of Ruskin. And Thomas Henry Huxley (1825–1895) the biologist, wrote Lay Sermons and Addresses in a fine manly English. But as regards Science the age might be called The Age of Darwin for his mighty discovery dominated the whole. And even literature as a study profited by his theory of evolution as first seen in his *Origin of Species*.

## THE END OF THE VICTORIAN AGE

The prominent novelists, Stevenson · Kipling · Meredith · Hardy · The last of the great poets, Swinburne · The new drama · Arthur Pinero · Bernard Shaw · Stephen Phillips · Poets and novelists of the last twenty years.

The psychological novel of George Eliot had found many imitators by less gifted writers. The reading public began to weary of them and gladly welcomed the signs of a change in subject. Stevenson's stories of adventure in a style of his own, Hardy's study of locality and a tale or two of horror, and above all the short story of Kipling were to be the feature of the day. Meredith stands by himself. While ap-

preciated by the few of a highly cultured class for his analytic power he was not the writer ever to become popular with the many.

### Robert Louis Balfour Stevenson (1856 – 1894),

born in Edinburgh, was the son of an engineer whose father and grandfather were also engineers. Robert was intended to follow the same profession, but after trying it gave it up for the law, which in its turn was abandoned for literature. Some of his experiences during this time, especially his acquaintance with seafaring folk proved of use to him in his career as novelist. He began as a boy to write essays, and was an eager reader of history and literature. His particular ambition was to form *a style that should have a charm of its own* regardless of the subject matter. In this he succeeded and for this style he is known. He was about twenty four when he came to know a literary set of friends two of whom were devoted to him as long as life lasted, – Sidney Colvin, and W. E. Henley.

Stevenson then went (1875) for a long stay to Fontainebleau, France, and he began to write for publication. America was his next destination, and here he married an American wife. He spent the last fifteen years of his life moving from place to place in search of relief from ill-health. In the end he bought some ground and founded a home, Vailima in Samoa, where the life of the South Sea Islands fascinated him. To the natives he was known as *Tusitala*, the teller of tales, and his relation to them was almost paternal. Stevenson died at Vailima, Dec. 3, 1894. The next day the native chieftains buried him on the topmost mountain peak, Vaea, that overlooks the Pacific Ocean.

Stevenson's works may be put into four classes: romances of adventure; psychological romances; essays; and lastly, poems which are again of two kinds. It was as a *writer of romances* that he wished to be known, and by four of these he became popular. *Treasure Island* (1882) a wonderfully told tale has been spoken of as the "best boy's book in the world". *Kidnapped* is a tale of the Scottish Highlands about the time of the Jacobite Rising of 1745. There is no woman in the book. The sequel to it, *Catrina* is a romantic love-story; hence it has a woman which is rare in Stevenson's works. *The Master of Ballantrae*, "a winter's tale", begins 1748, in Scotland, stretches through many years and travels into many countries, a story for sea-farers and sea-lovers.

Two psychological romances are striking, each in its way. *Will o'*

the Mill is the history of a man who cannot come to a decision even when he loves a woman. The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde tells of a complete transformation in the character and appearance of a man, so that he is able to personate two distinct individuals. The book caused a great sensation. Few liked it, but every-one read the uncanny tale. The fragment, *Weir of Hermiston* found unfinished at his death, was a work of promise.

Stevenson's poems were published by the title *Underwoods*. By his poems for children he was the most remarkable of the new school of poetry for the young. His dainty playful lines in his volume, *The Child's Garden of Verse* have a touch of delicate satire. Among the best poems are: *My Bed is a Boat*, *The Land of Story Books: My Shadow*.

"I have a little shadow that goes in and out with me  
And what can be the use of him is more than I can see."

Stevenson's Essays published as *Virginibus Puerisque* will probably remain as the best specimens of his cultivated style which has had a considerable influence on contemporary literature.

### Rudyard Kipling, born 1865

in Bombay was the son of a Professor of Sculpture and Architecture. His parents were people of literary tastes, and his mother had a gift for writing. The boy was sent to school at Westward Ho! North Devon in England, and returned at seventeen to India to be a journalist. Before he was twenty Mr. Kipling startled the Anglo-Indians by his witty verses and stories exposing their weak points. He became famous in England and America, and made his home for several years in the latter country after his marriage with an American lady (1892). Since then Mr. Kipling has travelled extensively and has returned to England. He is now said to spend the winter in South Africa and the summer near Brighton on the English south coast.

As an author Rudyard Kipling defies classification. He is a poet, a writer of short stories, of children's tales, and longer stories. But his fame was made by the short story. Here we may make four main divisions: Stories of India, including the animal stories; American, English, and Sea stories. The years from 1886-95 saw the publication of the *Plain Tales from the Hills*, and a volume entitled *Life's Handicap*. In both are the inimitable short stories, humorous and pathetic of three distinct groups; 1. the common English soldier; 2. the

native Indian, and 3. Anglo Indian Society, Civil and Military. He seizes an incident or a situation and gives us a snap-shot photograph in most graphic language. The observant journalist who sees just what is needed and no more is evident in every sentence. For pure pathos, *The Man Who Was*, and for pure fun, *Soldiers Three*, especially *The Incarnation of Krishna Mulvaney* are unequalled among short stories. These were followed by later tales of all parts where technical terms applied to ships, engines and bridge-building are beyond the average reader. Examples of this are the story: · 007, and the latest published volume (1909) *Actions and Reactions* where we hear of the airships of the year 2000. *The Day's Work* has a domestic story of English life with a decided charm of style, *The Brushwood Boy*, the realization of a childhood's love.

The longer stories may be put under three heads. 1. The animal story of the earliest primitive Indian conditions, which is told for children but which has an allegory and a moral for men. The renowned *Jungle Book*, the best example of this revival of the beast epic gives the history of a white child Mowgli who has been brought up by the "people" i. e. beasts of the Jungle. The knowledge of beast-life is astonishing. This is also the case in the story of *Quiquern*, a white seal, which takes us to Alaska. 2. The *Light that Failed* is the least successful of Kipling's tales. It deals with a domestic side of English life evidently unfamiliar. 3. But in *Kim*, a story of Indian life and Indian lore the author is back on his own ground and we have here an insight into a subject of which Kipling is master.

Two volumes of stories for children stand by themselves; *The Just So Stories* which tell *How the Whale got His Throat*, *How the Camel got His Hump* etc. And *Puck of Pook's Hill*, a collection of historical tales. Both belong to the new school of stories for children that tell them of nature or history in fairy tale manner. Kipling's study of the British soldier led him on to support the idea of England's Expansion for which the soldier gives his life. His advocacy of Imperialism is best seen in his poems, e. g. *The Barrack Room Ballads*, *The Seven Seas*, which latter give proof also of his love of the Sea. The finest among these is *The Last Chantey*. The Puritan, manly, character of the poet shews in his *Recessional*. Of all his work few lines will be so permanently remembered as the refrain: *Lest We Forget.*

### George Meredith (1828 - 1909)

was born in Hampshire which county was later the background for some of his tales. He was sent to school in Germany, and the strong influence of this country was long evident in him and his works. On returning to England Meredith studied law, but renounced it for literature and began by writing for newspapers. During the war of 1866 between Germany and Austria Meredith was a news correspondent. His acquaintance with foreign conditions broadened his mind, and, like Browning he was interested in humanity whether in or out of his own country. As a young writer Meredith went to see Thomas Carlyle who talked during the whole interview. At the conclusion he remarked to Meredith who had not been able to put in a word, that he "was a poor talker but might do better as a writer!"

Meredith's fame began with his first novel *The Ordeal of Richard Feverel* in which he exposes, in a satirical spirit, the mischief done by egotism. The special study of this weakness became henceforth associated with his name. Then followed other novels: *Evan Harrington*, called by its author a comedy; several poems; *Sandra Belloni*, a story of an Italian heroine; and a dramatic tale of middle class country life — the yeoman class — *Rhoda Fleming*. In choosing this subject Meredith approaches Mr. Hardy in his themes. *The Adventures of Harry Richmond* enlists our sympathies for a brilliant but not very worthy young man, and *Beauchamp's Career* depicts an officer in the navy who is in conflict with his little world owing to political views.

In 1879 Meredith's best known, perhaps also his greatest novel appeared, *The Egoist*. It is a careful analysis of the character of a man who is absolutely absorbed in himself. The author writes in the true spirit of comedy, telling a simple story in an easy, almost light manner, but with a serious purpose hidden behind it. *The Egoist* is a country gentleman who exacts from his friends and relatives an unswerving devotion as a matter of course. It is with this book that Meredith's great range of phrases and peculiar, fastidious use of words become a prominent characteristic of his style. In the next, *The Tragic Comedians*, the scene is laid in Germany and Switzerland. *Diana of the Crossways* is the history of Sheridan's brilliant grand-daughter, Mrs. Norton whose society career was more remarkable than enviable. The style of sentence and the mixed metaphors present a great diffi-

culty to the ordinary reader. We have to stop and think over the clever things said impromptu by people who show no signs otherwise of great intelligence. This gives an impression of unreality to the situation. Sometimes such a startling figure of speech as this greets us. "You beat me with your fists, but my spirit is towering, and *kicks freely!*"

Meredith wrote three more novels of which the last, *The Amazing Marriage* deals with one of the hard problems that he delights in. The book has many warm admirers. Meredith's prose was like much of Browning's poetry; it was pithy, and compressed, and worth the effort of study. But this would hardly make him a popular author. He was the most intellectual among later writers, and by them was venerated till his death. His literary friends agreed with R. L. Stevenson's verdict: "He is the Master of all of us!"

### Thomas Hardy, born 1840,

was once an architect but left that profession to take up writing as his calling. He had read much and seriously, and had been interested by the works of Crabbe dealing with humble life and the poems of Barnes in the Dorsetshire dialect. After his first work published anonymously, there appeared a novel: *Under the Greenwood Tree*, a rural painting of the Dutch school which is a fair sample of Hardy's earlier work. It shows that he aims at rendering life as he sees it, particularly in his own county, Dorsetshire, for Hardy is a true son of Wessex and loves the soil and the simple folk who live on it. He has been compared to the Dutch painter Teniers for his accuracy in reproducing details, the characteristic touches that stamp certain phases in peasant life. Nor are careful descriptions of nature lacking. *Under the Greenwood Tree* opens with the following line: "To dwellers in a wood almost every species of tree has its voice as well as its feature." The heroine of the tale, a pretty schoolmistress has three admirers in three social grades, a vicar (of the village Church) a well-to-do farmer, and lastly the honest but unlettered Dick, son of the carrier. His worthy father instructs his son on the question of women, thus: "Some women's charms are more in the manner than the material." The son carries off the prize, proud and pleased and unaware that his wife has a secret which she will never tell, i. e. she was once for a brief moment pledged to marry the Vicar. Her character is sketched as her admirers see it. We are reminded of the flowers in a florist's nosegay, cut off close to the blossom and wired to fit in with the rest of the bunch; nothing to

show the natural stem and leaf. In the rough peasant talk there drops in often a sentence belonging to a higher culture which surprises us as would a silk stripe in cotton patchwork. In spite of all, the book is eminently readable and a good introduction to Hardy's novels.

Of the tales that followed his first great success was *Far from the Madding Crowd*. *The Return of the Native*, is a masterly treatment of Human Nature, the best of this period of work, whereas *the Woodlanders*, is the most charming. A new manner is evident in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, a handling of the great problems of life and destiny. We have a sense throughout of coming tragedy which is seen in the ghastly ending that touches the depths of anguish. A winsome young girl dies as a criminal on the scaffold and our hearts are wrung with pity. This pessimism is also seen in *The Wessex Tales*, short stories of the highest order. In Hardy's work the chief point of interest is love, neither family ties nor children play an important part. With the exception of *Tess* and one other, all the later novels show the author's belief to be that, we are puppets of fate destined not so much to heights or depths of emotion, but a flat marshland of hopeless dreariness and misery.

In the *fine rendering of gradations of colour and sounds* Hardy takes us into the heart of nature and makes us share not only in the *scene but the pervading atmosphere* of gloomy woods or waste heaths or twilight evenings. Two volumes of poems rank Mr. Hardy among the poets who incline to broad lines and a strong epic treatment of their subject.

### Algernon Charles Swinburne (1837 – 1909).

The last Poet of the Romantic Movement.

He came of a Northumbrian family, but the home of his boyhood was in the sea-washed Isle of Wight. And the great love of the sea finds expression in some of his finest verse. As a boy he went to Eton and as a young man to Oxford where however he took no degree. He published his first plays at his own expense, *The Queen Mother*, and *Rosamond*, but failed to impress the public. In 1861, during a few weeks' stay in Italy young Swinburne made the acquaintance of a writer whose works he fervently admired, Walter Savage Landor. On his return to England Swinburne sent poems to the *Spectator*, and in this paper appeared his favourable criticism of Meredith's poem *Modern Love*. The poem by which Swinburne first sprang into fame was

Atalanta in Calydon (1861). He now began to take his place in a literary circle. But his deepest friendship he reserved for Mr. Theodore Watts-Dunton. The two poets shared a home at Putney Hill till Swinburne's death in April 1909.

The great number of Swinburne's poems may be briefly referred to here under four heads. 1. His poems of revolt, and songs on behalf of liberty. 2. His dramas, including his lyrical drama, *Atalanta in Calydon*: 3. His lyrical epics, and 4. his shorter lyrics. Under 1. his volume, *Poems and Ballads* proclaimed to society his utter disregard of all conventional standards. It was met by a storm of indignation. His other revolutionary poems were: *A Song of Italy*, and *Songs before Sunrise*. Like Mrs. Browning Swinburne was a champion of liberty for Italy. Under 2 we may mention his longest but not strongest play *Bothwell*. It was part of a trilogy planned to deal with the life of Mary, Queen of Scots, and of which the last part was entitled *Mary Stuart*. It is not a stage drama but a dramatic chronicle full of poetic passages of great beauty. His play of *Erechtheus* was an effort to revive English tragedy after the Greek form. But the work by which he is best known is the lyrical drama *Atalanta in Calydon* of which the choruses have made Swinburne famous. The *Hymn to Artemis* has a rhythmical beauty in which alliteration plays a great part. It deserves its name of *an immortal lyric*.

His bounding, swelling lines have brought a new and resonant quality into English verse, a verse so full of musical sound that no one asks after the meaning of it!

#### ATALANTA IN CALYDON

Come with bows bent and with emptying of quivers.  
 Maiden most perfect, lady of light,  
 With a noise of winds and many rivers,  
 With a clamour of waters, and with might;  
 Bind on thy sandals, Oh thou most fleet,  
 Over the splendour and speed of thy feet;  
 For the faint east quickens, the wan west shivers,  
 Round the feet of the day and the feet of the night.

In the third class comes first the epic of *Tristram of Lyonesse*, the old mediæval story. Here Swinburne was strongly influenced by Wagner. The verse is wonderfully expressive, and the heroic couplet has been adapted to the emotional theme with a master touch. Swinburne's lyrics treat of a vast range of subjects. His masterpiece among his shorter poems is his elegy on his friend Baudelaire: *Ave, atque*

*Vale* (= Hail, and Farewell). Among his Ballads, *A Match* is a fairy-like piece of verse.

"If love were what the rose is,  
And I were like the leaf . . ."

His poems on the sea convey with great truthfulness the sound of the sea in its many moods, the swell of the waves, and the splash on the shore. And then we see the waste, dreary stretch of sea-coast, e. g. *Shadow, Silence and the Sea. On the North Sea*. Some of his verses are short nature poems with a meaning. *Had I wist, or what the swallow says to the Spring*. Swinburne was the last great singer of the Romantic School. He had learnt something from most of his predecessors: Blake, Byron, Shelley in a lesser degree, and Keats. But his bounding, sounding lines have their own peculiar quality, and his impassioned verse has not the subjective character, the personal note of Byron's poems. He has been accused of luxuriating in sound that lacked meaning. But he wrote as a buoyant musician who improvises, and if his sound is in excess of the meaning, it is still musical. That he did not ignore meaning we see in his lines:

"For life's helm rocks to the windward and lee  
And time is as wind and as waves are we;  
And song is as foam that the sea winds fret;  
Though the *thought at its heart should be deep as the sea.*"

### The Drama.

In the same spring when Tennyson's impressive tragedy of Becket was given in London, a new play by a hitherto little known writer came to theatre-goers as a revelation.

Arthur Pinero (born 1855) had been fairly successful with *Sweet Lavender*. But with *The Second Mrs. Tanqueray* he took the London world by storm. It was given in packed houses where an intense, breathless attention prevailed. A good man tries to help a woman who had lost her place in society, to get it back again. He fails, and she commits suicide. The play in its hopelessness reminds us of Ibsen. Critics at once saw in it a new epoch for the English drama. The author has since written some of a more hopeful type, e. g. *Lady Bountiful*, *Trelawney of the Wells* etc. But his last play *Mid-Channel* (1909) leaves us with a sense of utter dreariness and lacks the power of his first success.

Another order of drama is offered to us by Bernard Shaw (b. 1856). He began by writing stories and criticisms and touched on a wide range

of subjects, social and literary. And social problems began to absorb him. Since 1896 Bernard Shaw writes plays that have a stamp of their own. He, a rigid, fearless Puritan satirizes all social evils with appalling outspokenness. His pictures of English character are not flattering. But he draws his subjects also from other sources. *The Man of Destiny* gives us an episode out of the life of Napoleon who outwitted a fair schemer, a woman who had stolen papers of value. *Arms and the Man* proves the superiority of brains to military display.

*Major Barbara* is a London society girl who becomes an officer in the Salvation Army. Her father is the owner of a vast business for making explosives used in warfare. The ironical treatment of this social group is a stroke of genius. Shaw is as bitter as Swift but he is also amusing.

Another satirist of society Oscar Wilde has written plays abounding with epigram. *Lady Windermere's Fan*, and *A Woman of No Importance* etc.

Henry Arthur Jones (born 1851) satirizes a different section of society, the Dissenters, or Nonconformists. In his play *Saints and Sinners* he shows up the narrow-minded hypocrite of the middle class in a little country town chapel community. His picture is painfully truthful.

Stephen Phillips, the son of an English clergyman was for some time a member of Mr. Benson's Company of actors. In 1897 his poem *Christ in Hades* made him famous and since 1899 he has written several dramas in fine flowing verse of the Miltonic order. He is the only prominent representative of the Poetic Drama. His three best known plays, are *Paolo and Francesca* (1899), *Herod*, and *Ulysses*. The last has had a great success on the stage. The first is interesting owing to its theme and the natural suggestion of a comparison with *Romeo and Juliet*. This play and *Herod* as well as *Nero*, a recent drama, deal with the tragedy of love. *Ulysses* ends in a peaceful scene of domestic happiness. *Faust* is an adaptation from Gœthe and suggests nothing new.

„And he shall stay the old sob of the sea  
 And heal the unhappy fancies of the wind,  
 And turn the moon from that old hopeless quest;  
 Trees without care shall blossom, and the fields  
 Shall, without labour, unto harvest come.” *Herod.*

The domestic drama that treats of the problems of life with a kindly smile and leaves us satisfied with the result, is well represented

by Mr. Hubert Henry Davies' *Cousin Kate*, Mrs. Gorringe's *Necklace* and *The Mollusc*. The characters are clearly drawn, but the home thrusts leave no sting behind.

### Lesser Poets.

To these belong many whose verse, while not of the first order, has yet enriched our literature.

William E. Henley (1840–93), the friend of Stevenson, wrote in a virile, often rugged manner. But occasionally verses of his are not easy to forget. His life long fight against ill-health gave him the determination here seen.

"Out of the night that covers me  
Black as the pit from pole to pole,  
I thank whatever gods may be,  
For my unconquerable soul."

W. B. Yeats (born 1865) is steeped in the Celtic spirit, and his haunting melodies have the true poetic ring.

#### DREAM OF A BLESSED SPIRIT

"She goes down the floor of heaven  
Shining bright as a new lance,  
And her guides are angels seven,  
While young stars about her dance."

John Davidson (1857–1909) has touched on a wide range of themes in his *Fleet Street Eclogues*. The note of despair in his verse reminds us of E. A. Poe.

"For the fate of elves is nearly the same  
As the terrible fate of men;  
To love, to rue: to be, and pursue  
A flickering wisp of the fen."

### The various forms of Prose.

Criticism had material enough on which to work. The efforts to revive and properly represent Shakespeare's plays, by Irving and Benson, the new drama, and the flood of prose called forth a most careful attention to the nature and merits of work. Prominent among such critics are the names of Sidney Lee, the student of Shakespeare; John Churton Collins, author of essays etc.; Andrew Lang, author of *Letters to Dead authors*; Sir E. Gosse, historian of English Literature and William Archer who has so ably criticized Poets of a Younger Generation.

Novel-writing expanded in all directions.

Novels of *purpose* (Mrs. Humphry Ward). *Robert Elsmere*.

Novels of *phantasy* (Rider Haggard). *She. King Solomon's Mines*.

Novels of a *religious nature* (John Shorthouse). *John Inglesant*.

Romances of *England* (Black. 2 Blackmore). *2 Lorna Doone*.

Novels of *local types* (Hardy. 2 Barrie). *2 Window in Thrums*.

Novels of *Bohemian life* (Du Maurier). *Trilby*.

Satires of *Society* (Samuel Butler). *The Way of All Flesh*.

And *Stories for Children*, such as Kingsley had begun in *Water Babies* and Lewis Carroll had added to in *Alice in Wonderland*.

With the Expansion of England the expansion of literature follows, and the colonies are beginning to contribute their share of work. Australia promises to have an array of minor poets, and in India a native born authoress has written in faultless, graceful English. We cannot but assume that the lamented and sudden death of our King Edward VII. (May 6, 1910) will be mourned in English verse on five Continents of the globe.

## AMERICAN LITERATURE

American Literature may be divided into three Periods. The Colonial, the Revolutionary and the National Periods.

### THE COLONIAL PERIOD

While Shakespeare was still living a group of Englishmen founded a colony (1607) Jamestown, in Virginia the new state named after the Virgin Queen, Elizabeth (1558–1603). The next year (1608) John Smith, the favourite hero of romance wrote the first English book about America "A True Account of Virginia" which was printed in England. Others kept chronicles of events, and in one of these records a shipwreck is described which some like to believe was among the incidents that Shakespeare made use of in *The Tempest* (1610–12). However this may be we see that the first attempts to write of America were made before the great dramatist laid down his pen. These colonists then were clearly Englishmen who, though living so far off still looked on England as "home". They had neither schools nor printing presses in Virginia, so sent their sons to be educated and their books to be printed in England.

In the year 1620 there landed on the north-east coast of America, now called Massachusetts, the good ship *Mayflower* bringing the first Puritan colonists. This religious sect, having suffered persecution in England, sought a new home where they could be free to worship as they pleased. In 1636 they founded Harvard College, and in 1639 set up the first printing press, both at Cambridge, near Boston, Mass. In the following year (1640) the first book printed in America appeared, the *Bay Psalm Book*, a metrical paraphrase of the Psalms. Religious and theological questions and the history of the colony formed the subjects of literary effort. While none of these efforts were valuable as literature they supplied writers of a later age with much very interesting material. In them we see how the people once persecuted, now perse-

cuted others even to burning them as witches. Such intolerance and cruelty were shared and even advocated by the most learned man of the day, Cotton Mather who wrote nearly four hundred books and pamphlets.

With the beginning of the next century we come to two names of which America is still proud. Jonathan Edwards (1703–1758), a great theologian and preacher was the first American philosopher. He had been deeply impressed by Locke's *Essay on the Human Understanding*, and Edward's most famous work *The Freedom of the Will* showed the deepest and most original thought. His great contemporary

### Benjamin Franklin

belongs both to the group of Makers of his Country and of great American writers. In spite of poverty and hardships in early life Franklin succeeded in nearly everything that he undertook, working with indomitable perseverance not only for himself, but for his country and mankind in general. In doing so he amassed a vast amount of useful knowledge and practical wisdom. Almanacs at this time played an important part in household literature and were consulted, next to the Bible on heavenly as well as earthly matters. When Franklin issued his Poor Richard's Almanac, a yearly publication, it soon superseded all others, being full of wise sayings and shrewd common sense. The New England colonists accepted his advice with eagerness and quoted Franklin's proverbs as they would King Solomon's; many of these became indeed part of the common speech, e. g.: "God helps them that help themselves", and "One to-day is worth two to-morrows". The same wisdom is seen in Franklin's *Memoirs* and *Letters*. Europe recognized this great American and the whole world has benefitted by his invention of the lightning rod. In his own country he is said to be the first and best of the type known as "the true Yankee".

### THE PERIOD OF THE REVOLUTION (1765–1787).

The most important literary production of this time was the Declaration of Independence drawn up by the patriot Thomas Jefferson and signed July 4, 1766 by the representatives of thirteen States. Fault has been found with its literary style, but the document will always remain the most treasured national possession of the Americans. From this period dates the unliterary but well-known popular song, *Yankee Doodle*, probably directed originally *at* the Yankee, by, it is *supposed*

an English army surgeon (1775?). Here also belongs a song both more literary and more patriotic in tone: *Hail Columbia!* by Joseph Hopkinson.

## THE NATIONAL PERIOD AFTER 1787

### Washington Irving (1783 – 1859).

While George Washington "the Father of his Country" was still living, a babe born in New York City was named after the great national hero, because the fond parents cherished the hope that their son might also achieve greatness. And he lived to be known as "the Father of American Literature". But as a boy Washington Irving showed no sign of talent, and found it hard to learn his letters. Study of any kind he disliked but loved to wander in fields and woods with his dog and gun. How carefully he observed nature and men, and what good use he made of these early associations we shall see later. At this time New York consisted of two distinct colonies, Dutch and English who kept very much apart. But the little English boy soon went about among the quaint Dutch, hearing many a story and learning many a legend, and with his quick sense of humour noting things odd or original. When sixteen Irving was articled to a lawyer to whose daughter he became attached and betrothed. Her early death was a blow that threatened serious injury to his health necessitating a long absence in Europe. On his return he became a lawyer but only in name.

As yet no man had made writing a profession and no publishing houses existed. Irving had had no thought of living by his pen, but having little success in business he and his brother in company with a friend brought out a paper, *Salmagundi* which was short lived. His next attempt was a mock history of Old New York and its early Dutch settlers.

The *History of New York* by Dietrich Knickerbocker was a good natured satire well received by the public, the Dutch excepted, for their ancestors had been the object of a laugh. It was the beginning of fame for the author but was not followed by any work of importance.

The Irving brothers who had a business in Europe then sent Washington to look after their interests abroad. This was the turning point of his life. He met with a kindly welcome in England where Scott, Byron, Coleridge, Moore and others were delighting the reading world by poems and romances. Irving's inborn love of nature became an ecstasy of delight at the sight of a wild flower or the sound of a lark's note.

But for three years he remained unproductive. Then the shock of hearing that his brothers had failed in business called forth all the manhood in him.

His first effort to support himself by his pen brought forth *The Sketch-book*, his best known work. Sir Walter Scott induced an English publisher to pay £200 for it. It appeals alike to the English and Americans, to the former by such essays as *Westminster Abbey* and *Stratford-on-Avon* where the "nature of the place presses down upon the soul, and hushes the beholder into noiseless reverence"; while *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* and the popular *Story of Rip Van Winkle* are dear to every American child.

Rip, a subject of King George, is put to sleep on the mountain side by goblins, and he wakes twenty years later to find himself a republican. His dog is gone, his gun has rusted, his friends are dead and no one will believe his story! This tale has been dramatized with very great success, owing mainly to the impersonating of Rip by the gifted actor Joseph Jefferson.

Here he makes use of his boyhood's rambles, and his native land, its hills and dales are peopled with fantastic forms half real half legendary. Irving's reputation was made. In the next five years he wrote "*Bracebridge Hall*" which deals with English life, and "*Tales of a Traveller*". Three years spent in Spain gave him material for "*The Alhambra*" tales of the ruined palace of Moorish fame which Irving describes with a peculiar charm of style. Later he wrote *The Conquest of Granada*, which together with *The Life of Columbus*, *The Life of Washington*, *The Biography of Goldsmith* makes up the number of his larger works. England showered honours on him, but after 17 years Irving returned to his own country which had long since felt proud of him. Here he died Nov. 28, 1859. Washington Irving was the first American who cared not only for what he said, but *how he said it*. His *clear and beautiful style* still fascinates both the school boy and the man of letters.

### THE BIRTH OF AMERICAN POETRY

#### William Cullen Bryant (1794 – 1878).

The first American to deserve the name of a true poet was the young author of *Thanatopsis* (= vision of death) who wrote this, his best poem when seventeen years of age. It was published anonymously some time afterwards and was at once recognized and appreciated. The thoughts on life and death are clothed in lofty language and a grand and stately metre. Bryant was a true lover of nature, and in this

he was further stimulated by coming to know Wordsworth's poems. All his most popular poems are lyrics on the beauties of nature; e. g. *The Death of the Flowers*; *The Forest Hymn*, *The Flood of Years*, *The Fringed Gentian*, *To a Waterfowl* etc. At the age of seventy he published a translation of Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. In 1878 he died, aged 82.

### **James Fenimore Cooper (1789 – 1851), the first famous novelist.**

Born in New Jersey, James Fenimore Cooper was taken early to an uncultivated part of New York State where he grew up roaming about among Red-Indians, fur traders, wild animals and wilder nature. Eyes and ears he kept open; a habit which later bore fruit in his works. It is hardly surprising to find such a youth dissatisfied with his new surroundings when sent to Yale College at the age of fourteen. When sixteen James shipped as a sailor and kept to sea-life for six years. He then settled with a young wife in New York City and drew from his stored up memories incidents for his tales of land and sea. The first and best known are his Leatherstocking stories. The hero of five of these, Natty Bumppo a backwoodsman is nicknamed Leatherstocking by the Indians. Boys still read with avidity, *The Deerslayer*, *The Last of the Mohicans*, *The Pathfinder*, *The Pioneers*, *The Prairie*. His first sea-story *The Pilot* was written to rival Scott's *Pirate*. Cooper having, as an old sailor, seen weak points in the latter work. Then followed *The Red Rover* and others. Cooper's later novels written during a long stay in Europe are inferior in quality. He was a great contrast to Irving in that his style was often careless and words misplaced. But the fame of both and their works spread over into the Old World where the novelist of the Red-Indian, and of pioneer life with its adventures has sometimes been called *The American Walter Scott*.

### **Edgar Allan Poe (1809 – 1849).**

This most original of writers whose fame with the general public rests chiefly on two poems, has been most unfortunate in the public estimate of him since his death. Born in Boston but early an orphan Poe was brought up in Virginia by a worthy couple, Allan by name, who took him to England and put him to school. Idleness, bad habits when young, restlessness and an inclination for drink threatened to ruin his chances of a career. He was trained for the Army which he later left. The one bright spot in his life was Poe's love for his wife, the *Annabel Lee* of

an exquisite little poem so named. In 1833 Poe won a literary prize by a strange tale: *A Manuscript found in a bottle*.

His lovely wife whom he married 1833 died early, and after this crushing blow Poe's tales became increasingly weird and ghastly. *The Murders in the Rue Morgue*, a tale of Paris life made him popular with the French by its unusual construction. Then followed *The Gold Bug*, *The Black Cat*, and the first detective story ever written, *The Purloined Letter* which like all he wrote showed a peculiar and original genius, and were very popular. With the appearance of *The Raven* Poe's fame as a poet exceeded that as prose writer. It is a poem of despair, an effect produced by the highest art. A poet who is sorrowing for his "loved and lost Lenore" is startled by a raven who replies to every question "*Nevermore*". This one word, the refrain of every verse produces a sense of appalling hopelessness, Poe's gift of expression in his choice and handling of the language is best seen in *The Bells*, a jingle of sounds that correspond to the meaning of the words. From the silver bells that *tinkle tinkle tinkle in the icy air of night* we hear a succession of bells of many tones till we come to the "*muffled monotone*" of the tolling "*iron bells*".

For these two poems is Poe best known, although he wrote others. He died at forty miserably, the victim of a party of unprincipled men who made him drink to excess. Praise and blame have been bestowed unevenly on Poe and many of his better qualities have been ignored. He was conscientious in his work and especially in his reviews of other writers' works. Of him Mrs. Browning said that he was the only one who had taken the trouble to *read* her poems before he criticized them! Poe was the most original genius in American literature. For more than a generation he was far more appreciated in Europe than in his own country. But in recent American criticism more justice has been done him as man and author.

### Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804 – 1864).

Nathaniel Hawthorne of Puritan descent was born in Salem, Mass. a place long associated with Puritans and where the unfortunate so-called witches had been burned a century before. The records of these cruel deeds deeply impressed his young mind. His boyhood was passed in a very lonely spot in Maine where he had no youthful companions. Thus he early acquired a love for a hermit life and made few friends when sent to College, although the genial Longfellow was one of his

classmates. On leaving College Hawthorne again sought seclusion for twelve years writing short stories and even a novel that was a failure, but learning by experience his peculiar and polished style which later made him famous. A marriage that proved very happy brought him also literary success. A collection of sketches entitled *Mosses from an Old Manse* was the first of his now well-known works. There followed *Twice-told Tales* with which Longfellow was pleased. He then wrote books for children, with as much care as all his other work, e. g. *Grandfather's Chair*, *The Snow Image*, *a Child's History* and the great favourites, *The Wonder Book* and *Tanglewood Tales* for boys and girls. These are the old myths simply told for young folks.

But his writing was not sufficient to support himself and his family till his now famous work, *The Scarlet Letter* appeared, called by some a *novel* by some a *romance*. This is a story of early Puritan days in which Hawthorne probes deep into the human heart and conscience showing the results that inevitably follow wrong-doing. A mystery and sense of deepening gloom pervades the work, for the writer was once the boy who had pondered over the records of his Puritan ancestors, and the Puritan times were not so far back in the past in Hawthorne's day as now. The book was his greatest success and established his reputation as a writer. It was followed by others, full of fanciful imaginings, and popular with that generation, e. g. *The House of the Seven Gables*, *The Blithedale Romance*, and *The Marble Faun*. The scene of the last named was laid in Italy which country Hawthorne visited when he was Consul in England. *Our Old Home* is a series of sketches of English life. Hawthorne returned to America where he died 1864. The manuscript of an unfinished romance was laid in his coffin.

Most of Hawthorne's work contains an allegory or a stern lesson. There is a haunting sense of mystery as original as that of Poe's works but of a nobler order emanating from a pure and delicate imagination. He was a master of style, so simple and perfect that the term *literary artist* may be justly bestowed on him.

### CHANGES OF THOUGHT IN NEW ENGLAND

We have now to consider very stirring times in New England where great changes were taking place, changes in religious and political views which, when expressed in writing, brought new elements into the lite-

rature of the day. We have seen the influence of Puritanism on Hawthorne and his work which in spite of a stern and sad tone was widely read. A new sect calling themselves Unitarians now arose and especially advocated man's interest in his fellow men. They felt that the struggle to live was degenerating into a desire for wealth and worldly pleasures. Therefore a group of men formed a club for aiming higher, for discussing things that go beyond or "transcend" the ordinary, petty affairs of life, and this body of enthusiasts was known as Transcendentalists.

To these belong Henry D. Thoreau, a passionate lover of nature who wrote poems that were then admired, teaching a loving observation of leaf and blossom and plant. But the man who was the master mind of the Transcendentalists was

### Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803 – 1882).

He came of a race of preachers, and all his home surroundings were religious and literary. When Emerson was eight years old his father died, and poverty and privation marked his early life. His brother by hard work was barely able to keep Ralph at Harvard College. There the youth learnt to know the writings of Plato, Montaigne the French essayist, and Shakespeare, also at a later date some of the great Germans. After leaving College Emerson became a minister, but on changing some of his views he resigned his charge. He went to Europe visiting Italy, France and England. Thus he came to know many great Englishmen, e. g. Wordsworth, Coleridge and above all Thomas Carlyle with whom he was friends till death. Carlyle said of Emerson "he was the most loveable creature we had ever looked upon". On returning to America Emerson settled at Concord where he gave lectures, doing this for forty-six years, the first real lecturer of America. These lectures, in a somewhat changed form he published as essays in books with various titles for each series. In the first *Nature*, he says the laws of Nature are the same that govern our souls. In another volume he treated of *Self-Reliance*, *Friendship*; and in another still of *Character*, *Manners*, also of *Representative men*, *Conduct of Life* etc. Of his poems, the *Concord Hymn* was a great favorite for its national and patriotic spirit.

He wrote comparatively few books, but his influence on his generation was unequaled. The greatest thinker of his time, he was the most modest of men. His greatness was felt alike in his books and lectures.

He uplifted all who heard or read him by his nobility of mind and unconquerable optimism. And he taught great truths in short pithy sentences, such as *Hitch your waggon to a star*. J. R. Lowell has given an account of one of Emerson's lectures, thus:

"It began nowhere, and ended everywhere; and yet as always with that divine man, it left you feeling that something beautiful had passed that way, — something more beautiful than anything else, like the rising and setting of stars —"

### THE TIME OF THE CIVIL WAR, AND AFTER John Greenleaf Whittier (1807 – 1892).

Among the many questions that came to the fore in this time of awakening was that of abolishing the practice of slavery which prevailed in the Southern States. We know that a Civil War was the result. Much was written that had a mere passing interest, but one poet of that day who was even named "The Laureate of the Abolitionists" was the author of poems on other subjects. John Greenleaf Whittier of a Quaker family was a poor boy who worked like a farm labourer in the summer and made shoes in the winter. A copy of Burns' poems given him filled him with a desire to imitate Burns, and this is seen in his first printed poem. At twenty he had a year's schooling, but gave up all his personal ambitions to be made Secretary of the Anti-Slavery Society. His work of this time was of no lasting literary value. The war over, he settled down quietly and gave his country the poems for which he is beloved. *Snowbound*, a poem for children, tells of his own home-life with a charming simplicity, and is the best of his longer poems. Whittier's favorite subjects were taken from Colonial times, e. g. *Mabel Martin*, of the days of the witches, and simple country scenes, e. g. *The Barefoot Boy*, *In School Days* and *Maud Muller*, all favorites at the present day. Though his grammar and style sometimes showed lack of early education, he spoke to the hearts of the people and saw nature with a poet's eyes. Other poets mourned him as deeply as did the people when he died, 1892.

### Henry Wadsworth Longfellow (1807 – 1882).

Longfellow, the most universally beloved of American poets, was born in Portland on the coast of Maine, one of the northern states of the Union. The surrounding scenery is such as a poet loves. To the west lie the White Mountains and stretches of primeval forest with giant trees such as no European ever saw. On the east side the harbour with islands of many tints rising out of the blue Atlantic presents a scene of beauty such as J. M. Turner delighted to paint.

Longfellow had first a good school education and was then sent to Bowdoin College. He began at thirteen to publish poems, and when he had earned a sufficient sum he bought a copy of the *Life of Chatterton*. His friendships of College days were many of them lifelong. Longfellow was Professor of Modern Languages first at Bowdoin, then at Harvard College Cambridge, Massachusetts. Each time he first went for study and preparation to Europe. He here mastered several European languages and translated many foreign poems into English verse with great skill. Longfellow's greatest success in this line is his Translation of Dante, a triumph of art. He lived at Cambridge (Mass.) honoured and beloved by all, and by children especially, till his death. February 27, Longfellow's birthday, was long kept as *his day* by schools in many parts of America.

Longfellow's poems are of all styles on a great diversity of subjects; lyrics, ballads, epics, translations and semi-dramatic-poems. We know him best by three longer narrative poems and some shorter poems that are loved in all parts of the world, a few being translated into forty languages.

Longfellow's fame rests chiefly on his long poems. *Evangeline*, *The Courtship of Miles Standish* and *Hiawatha*. The first two are in hexameter verse. *Hiawatha* is modeled after the national epic of Finland, *Kalevala*. It is supposed to represent the wild poetry of the Red Indians, without rhyme and with constant repetitions. The hero *Hiawatha*, like Fenimore Cooper's Indians, goes a-hunting, learns the speech of animals and loves and marries *Minnehaha*, beautiful maid, who dies. *Evangeline* is the story of a girl who lived in Nova Scotia when the English took it from the French (1755) and drove the people out of their homes. *Evangeline* loses sight of her lover, till, after many privations and wanderings she finds him dying in a hospital. The poem has many beautiful lines and is universally beloved.

"Sorrow and silence are strong, and patient endurance is godlike."

*Miles Standish* is a gruff captain who sends another man to ask fair *Priscilla* to be his wife, on which she says to the messenger: "Why don't you speak for yourself, John?" Of the short poems, *The Psalm of Life* has a world wide reputation. It is the voice of hope urging men to have courage:

"Be not like dumb driven cattle,  
Be a hero in the strife."

*The Bridge, The Rainy Day, The Village Blacksmith, The Day is*

*Done, Excelsior* are the favourites especially of youth. Two longer poems, *My Lost Youth*, and, *The Building of the Ship* are of great interest for the first refers to Longfellow's own youth, and the last is influenced in its form by Schiller's *Song of the Bell*. *The Golden Legend* goes back to the thirteenth century and is of a religious nature. *Tales of a Wayside Inn* is a collection of stories some of which are in excellent verse. Longfellow says simply and forcibly what all feel to be true. And he says it *in the most melodious manner*. Hence his popularity. He was not a great original genius, but the poet adored by the people of America and England. A bust to Longfellow stands in the Poets' Corner of Westminster Abbey.

### **Oliver Wendel Holmes. Bayard Taylor. James Russell Lowell.**

These three writers belong both to prose and poetry. We are attracted to them also by a certain personal charm and two of them represented America in Europe where they favourably impressed English and Germans by their remarkably cultured minds.

Oliver Wendel Holmes (1809–1894) is best known as the author of *The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table*. The Autocrat is a chatty, kindly sort of man who reports the doings and sayings of a boarding-house party of people so vividly as to be quite dramatic. The book is full of witty, pithy sayings. The poems of the Autocrat are introduced, notably: *The Wonderful One Hoss (horse) Shay*. It was a Deacon's carriage that ran perfectly for a hundred years, and at last one day burst up like a bubble. Another poem of O. W. Holmes, *The Chambered Nautilus* is serious and has a grand lesson. The spiral shell in which a little insect lives grows wider and wider towards the opening, and the insect grows larger as it moves on through the shell. Which teaches a striving after greater ideals and nobler aims. Another poem, "*Has any old fellow got mixed up with the Boys?*" refers to Holmes' classmates, and shows the poet's buoyant spirits even in old age.

Bayard Taylor (1825–78) wrote thirty seven books in his not very long life. He was a self-made man who by immense perseverance mastered several languages, wrote some poems, many novels, gave lectures and went on an embassy to Germany. His great achievement is a Translation of *Faust* in the original metre. Among his novels, the *Story of Kennet*, his native place, is pleasant reading. One poem is likely to live, *The Bedouin's Song*. It has a verse that stays in the memory:

"I love thee, I love but thee,  
 With a love that shall not die,  
 Till the sun grows cold, and the stars are old,  
 And the leaves of the Judgment Book unfold!"

James Russell Lowell (1819–1891) was also poet, essayist, humorist, and a foreign ambassador. His sympathies were on the anti-slavery side of the great question of the day. He published three of his most important poems in one year, 1845: *The Vision of Sir Launfal*, *The Biglow Papers*, and *A Fable for Critics*. The first in a deeply religious tone is a new form of the story of *The Holy Grail*. The opening lines descriptive of June, of the birds singing, and the grass growing, have made the poem famous. *The Biglow Papers* are in dialect, intended to rouse a laugh, but the sentiments are serious. One delightful short dialect poem called *The Courting* is very popular. Lowell's volume of essays, *My Study Windows*, is most valuable for his remarks on Chaucer. He was sent to Spain and England as minister, and was honoured with a degree by both Oxford and Cambridge.

A book of the time of the Civil War is known almost as well abroad as in America, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. The writer, Mrs. Harriett Beecher Stowe was of a gifted family and wrote some other novels. But her first came just at the most favourable moment for such a work, and was written chiefly from what the authoress knew to be facts. It has been translated into a great number of other languages.

### Francis Bret Harte (1838 – 1902)

was the poet of the West, a poet in prose. He was born in Albany but went early to the Rocky Mountains, at that time a wild, uncivilized region abounding in crime. Bret Harte's short and intensely vivid stories paint incidents which prove that a spark of good may be found in the blackest nature. Mines and miners are his chief subjects. His tale *The Luck of Roaring Camp* was the first. A little forsaken babe is the means of bringing out the spark of kindness in the worst ruffian of Roaring Camp. Other stories followed, *M'liss*, *Miggles*, *The Man of No Account* etc. each a masterpiece in its way, where pathos and humour mingle. His celebrated poem *The Heathen Chinee* raised Bret Harte to the height of his fame. His reputation in England and America is growing and he ranks as the first of American writers of the West.

Walt Whitman (1819–1892) is a writer of poetry in a style so peculiar, so like prose, that some will not call it poetry. His chief work

is *Leaves of Grass*. A really spirited poem is on President Lincoln, *O Captain! my Captain!* the only one of his poems universally liked.

### American Humorists.

**Artemus Ward**, in real life Charles J. Browne (1834–67) was the first American who earned his living by lectures that were purposely absurd. He would make his audience laugh by such simple remarks as these: "Time passed on. It always does, by the way.. It is a kind of way time has." This professed joker who amused so many was all the time dying of consumption. Death released him when he was only thirty three. His books are as funny as his lectures.

The second great humorist has just passed away (April 21) **Mark Twain**, or rather **Samuel Clemens** (1835–1910) was in turn printer, pilot, editor, and author. He was born in Florida, and spent years on the Mississippi River. What he saw he described, and has done so wherever he travelled. In England he has been as great a favourite, perhaps greater than in America. *The Jumping Frog* appeared in 1867, and its author was almost immediately a man of mark. Then came a European tour, followed by *The Innocents Abroad*, *The Tramp Abroad*, *Tom Sawyer*, *Huckleberry Finn*, *Life on the Mississippi*, and other works.

Of **Mark Twain** a prominent Englishman said when he was living; "Mark Twain is a man whom Englishmen and Americans do well to honour. He is a true consolidator of nations. His delightful humour is of the kind which dissipates and destroys natural prejudices. His love of truth and his love of honour overflow all boundaries. He has made the world better by his presence."\*

### EPILOGUE

The currents in modern American literature are too diverse to be mentioned briefly.

Poetry has been largely under the influence of Keats. A few women singers have, or will have a high place in their country's literature for quality if not quantity. A generation ago Miss Emily Dickinson wrote a few verses of intense feeling. A little poem on the *Gentian*, the "purple creature" shows a keen eye for nature. Towards the very end of last century there died a promising poet, **Richard Hovey**. He occasionally approaches Whitman in his loose rhymes. He was a writer

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\* From the *Daily Mail*, April 22, 1910.

of Bohemian verses, as some of his titles indicate: *Songs of Vagabondia*, *Spring*, *The Sea Gipsy* of which one verse shows his manner:

"I am fevered with the sunset,  
I am fretful with the bay,  
For the wander-thirst is on me  
And my soul is in Cathay."

A living poet with the pen name of Joaquin Miller writes very fine verses of which his poem *Columbus* is a good example.

Prose is represented by a quantity of short stories. The novel has one or two great names belonging to it. Mr. William Dean Howells (born 1837) is the veteran novelist whose peculiar compressed, pungent style, is seen in his first work, *Their Wedding Journey*, and several later novels: *A Foregone Conclusion*, *The Rise of Silas Lapham*; also in his essays and criticisms. Mr. Henry James (born 1842) stands close to him with his *Daisy Miller*, *The Portrait of a Lady*, *What Maisie Knew*.

For finely worded cultivated English America can show an array of names worthy to be mentioned together with Washington Irving, the Father of American Literature.

## SPECIMENS OF ENGLISH VERSE FROM THE TENTH TO THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

### Period I: Anglo-Saxon. Tenth and Eleventh Century.

From Beowulf's last words.

Thu eart ende-laf	usses cynnes
<i>Thou art the last one</i>	<i>of our kin</i>
Waegmundinga.	ealle Wyrd forsweop
<i>Of the Waegmundings</i>	<i>All Wyrd swept away</i>
mine magas	to metodsceaft,
<i>of my kindred</i>	<i>at the time appointed</i>
Eorlas on elne	ic him after sceal
<i>earls in their strength</i>	<i>I after them shall go.</i>

### Period II: Middle English. Fourteenth Century.

Chaucer's seven-line stanza.

O sodeyn wo! that euer art successour  
To worldly blisse spreyn<sup>1</sup> with bitternesse;  
Thende of the joye of our worldly labour;  
Wo occupieth the fyn<sup>2</sup> of our gladnesse  
Herke this conseil for thy sikernesse,<sup>3</sup>  
Upon thy glade day have in thy mynde  
The unwar<sup>4</sup> wo or harm that comth bihynde.

From *The Man of Lawe's Tale*.

### Period III: Elizabethan Blank Verse. Sixteenth Century.

There is a tide in the affairs of men  
Which taken at the flood, leads on to fortune;  
Omitted, all the voyage of their life  
Is bound in shallows and in miseries.  
On such a full sea are we now afloat,  
And we must take the current when it serves,  
Or lose our ventures.

From *Julius Cæsar*. Wm. Shakespeare.

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<sup>1</sup> sprinkled; mixed. <sup>2</sup> end. <sup>3</sup> safety. <sup>4</sup> unperceived.

## Period IV: The Sonnet. Seventeenth Century.

## On my own blindness.

When I consider how my light is spent  
 Ere half my days in this dark world and wide,  
 And that one talent which is death to hide  
 Lodged with me useless, though my soul more bent  
 To serve therewith my Maker, and present  
 My true account, lest He returning chide,  
 "Doth God exact day-labour, light denied?"  
 I fondly ask. But Patience, to prevent  
 That murmur, soon replies, "God doth not need  
 Either man's work or his own gifts. Who best  
 Bear his mild yoke, they serve him best. His state  
 Is kingly: thousands at his bidding speed,  
 And post o'er land and ocean without rest;  
 They also serve who only stand and wait."

John Milton.

## Period V: Return of the Lyric. Eighteenth Century.

## The banks o' Doon.

Ye banks and braes o' bonnie Doon,  
 How can ye bloom sae fresh and fair  
 How can ye chant, ye little birds,  
 And I sae weary, fu' o' care:  
 Thou'l break my heart, thou warbling bird,  
 That wantons thro' the flowering thorn:  
 Thou minds me o' departed joys,  
 Departed—never to return.

Robert Burns.

## Period VI: Shelley's Elegy. Early Nineteenth Century.

## Adonais.

He lives, he wakes—'tis Death is dead, not he;  
 Mourn not for Adonais. — Thou young Dawn,  
 Turn all thy dew to splendour, for from thee  
 The spirit thou lamentest is not gone!  
 Ye caverns and ye forests, cease to moan!  
 Cease, ye faint flowers and fountains! and, thou Air,  
 Which like a mourning veil thy scarf hadst thrown  
 O'er the abandoned Earth, now leave it bare  
 Even to the joyous stars which smile on its despair!

Percy Bysshe Shelley.

Period VII: Patriotic and Martial Verse. Mid-Victorian Age.

The Charge of the Light Brigade.

“Forward the Light Brigade!”  
Was there a man dismayed?  
Not, though the soldier knew  
Some one had blundered:  
Theirs not to make reply,  
Theirs not to reason why,  
Theirs but to do and die:  
Into the valley of Death  
Rode the Six Hundred.

Cannon to right of them,  
Cannon to left of them,  
Cannon in front of them,  
Volleyed and thundered;  
Stormed at with shot and shell,  
Boldly they rode and well;  
Into the jaws of Death,  
Into the mouth of Hell,  
Rode the Six Hundred.

*Alfred Tennyson.*

American Verse. By a Living Poet (1910).

Columbus.

Behind him lay the gray Azores,  
Behind the Gates of Hercules:  
Before him not the ghost of shores,  
Before him only shoreless seas.  
The good mate said: “Now must  
we pray,  
For lo! the very stars are gone.  
Brave Admiral, speak, what shall  
I say?”  
“Why, say, ‘Sail on! sail on! and on!’” ...

Then, pale and worn, he kept his deck,  
And peered through darkness. Ah that  
night  
Of all dark nights! And then a speck –  
A light! A light! A light! A light!  
It grew, a starlit flag unfurled!  
It grew to be Time’s burst of dawn.  
He gained a world; he gave that world  
Its grandest lesson: “On! sail on!”

*Joaquin Miller*

## LIST OF TRANSLATED WORDS

<i>abyss</i> Abgrund, Schlund	<i>crude</i> unreif, unfertig	<i>flippant</i> leichtsinnig, keck
<i>anchoress</i> Einsiedlerin	<i>Cursor Mundi</i> Renner	<i>flutter</i> Aufregung
<i>backwoodsman</i> Hinterwälter	durch die Welt	<i>forgery</i> Fälschung
<i>baffle</i> verhindern		<i>fraught</i> beladen
<i>baldness</i> Kahlheit		<i>fray</i> Reiberei
<i>be articled</i> in die Lehre gehen		<i>fur trader</i> Pelzhändler
<i>be becalmed</i> in eine Windstille geraten		
<i>beholder</i> Zuschauer	<i>daffodil</i> Narzisse	<i>gait</i> Gang(art)
<i>be on record</i> überliefert	<i>Deerslayer</i> Wildtöter	<i>genuine</i> wahr, echt
<i>betroth</i> verloben	<i>deliberate</i> überlegend	<i>give offence</i> Anstoß erregen
<i>backgammon</i> Puffspiel	<i>diffuseness</i> Weitschweifigkeit	<i>give up to</i> sich hingeben
<i>blacking</i> Wichse	<i>digression</i> Abschweifen	<i>gleeman</i> fahrender
<i>bleak</i> rauh	<i>distraught</i> verwirrt, wahn	Sänger
<i>boisterous</i> ungestüm	sinnig	<i>gossamer fancy</i> feine Phantasie
<i>bow-bow strain</i> geradezu Erzählen	<i>diversity</i> Abweichung	<i>grudge</i> mißgönnen
<i>braggart</i> Prahler	<i>divines</i> Geistlichkeit	
<i>brazier</i> Kupferschmied	<i>dog the steps</i> auf Schritt und Tritt folgen	<i>hag</i> Hexe
<i>bribery</i> Bestechung	<i>drudgery</i> mühsame Arbeit	<i>halo</i> Heiligenschein
<i>bustle</i> Hast, Unruhe	<i>efface</i> in den Hintergrund	<i>handicapped</i> gehindert
<i>butler</i> Hofmarschall	stellen	<i>hapless</i> unglücklich
<i>butt</i> Zielscheibe	<i>e. g.</i> exempli gratia, z. B.	<i>helpmeet</i> Gefährtin
<i>carouse</i> Zechen	<i>enclosure</i> Innenraum	<i>hitch</i> anspannen
<i>castigate</i> züchtigen	<i>encroachment</i> Eingriff	<i>hoist</i> in die Höhe ziehen
<i>chatterer</i> Plauderer	<i>enthrall</i> bezaubern	<i>hold sway</i> Herrschaft
<i>check</i> (ver)hindern	<i>entrance fee</i> Eintrittsgeld	haben über
<i>classmate</i> Klassenkamerad	<i>epitome</i> Abriß	<i>homage</i> Huldigung
<i>coarseness</i> Roheit	<i>exciseman</i> Mautner	<i>hush</i> zum Schweigen
<i>contriver</i> Erfinder	<i>exemplify</i> erläutern	bringen
<i>crag</i> Klippe		
<i>crave</i> dringend verlangen	<i>fade</i> schwinden	<i>Il Penseroso</i> der Nachdenkende
<i>creed</i> Glaubensbekenntnis	<i>far-fetched</i> weithergeholt	<i>imp</i> Kobold
	<i>fastidious</i> peinlich genau	<i>innate</i> angeboren
	<i>felicities</i> schöne Sprache	<i>in o.'s grasp</i> im Bereich
	<i>find vent</i> sich Luft machen	<i>intrinsic</i> wesentlich
	<i>fitful</i> launenhaft	<i>invective</i> Schmährede
	<i>flag</i> erschlaffen, nachlassen	<i>jerky</i> abbrechend

<i>keep apart from</i> sich abseits halten	<i>pay heed</i> achten	<i>sob</i> schluchzen
<i>knell</i> Totenglocke	<i>peevish</i> griesgrämig	<i>stale</i> abgeschmackt
<i>label</i> bezeichnen, benennen	<i>permeate</i> durchdringen	<i>strive after</i> streben nach
<i>lack</i> fehlen, Mangel	<i>pine</i> sich sehnen nach	<i>sturdiness</i> Derbheit
<i>L'Allegro</i> der Freudvolle	<i>pining</i> Qual, Leiden	<i>suitors</i> Freier, Bewerber
<i>layman</i> Laie	<i>pithy</i> markig, kräftig	
<i>lifting</i> Raub	<i>poach</i> wildern	<i>take orders</i> Priester werden
<i>livery stable</i> Mietstall	<i>portly</i> stattlich	<i>taunt</i> Stichelei
<i>living</i> Pfründe	<i>precocious</i> frühreif	<i>tawny</i> gelblich
<i>loutish</i> ungeschickt, roh	<i>probe</i> eindringen	<i>traceable</i> zurückzuführen
<i>turk</i> sich versteckt halten	<i>prolific</i> fruchtbar	<i>twine</i> flechten, schlingen
<i>mar</i> entstellen, verderben	<i>prowess</i> Tapferkeit, Heldenmut	
<i>medieval</i> mittelalterlich	<i>quaintness</i> Seltsamkeit, das Altmodische	<i>undergo</i> erleiden
<i>menial</i> gemein, niedrig	<i>ramble</i> wandern	<i>underhand</i> listig
<i>a mere trifle</i> bloße Lap-	<i>range of words</i> Wortschatz	<i>undulating</i> wellenförmig
palie, Kleinigkeit	<i>renounce the faith</i> Gläuben abschwören	<i>unpretentious</i> anspruchslos
<i>midget</i> etwas ganz Kleines	<i>repartee</i> Schlagfertigkeit	<i>unstinted</i> unbegrenzt
<i>mock-heroic</i> komisches	<i>rid</i> sich vom Halse schaffen	<i>uproarious</i> lärmend
Heldengedicht	<i>roam</i> umherstreifen	<i>usher</i> einführen
<i>morbid</i> ungesund	<i>rollicking</i> ausgelassen	
<i>moth</i> Motte	<i>secluded</i> weltentrückt	<i>verging on</i> grenzend an
<i>obtrude</i> vordringen	<i>scarred</i> narbig	<i>vie with</i> wetteifern
<i>oddity</i> Seltsamkeit	<i>scent</i> Duft, Wohlgeruch	<i>vividness</i> Lebendigkeit
<i>offshoot</i> Ausläufer	<i>sedate</i> gesetzt, ruhig	<i>volume</i> Umfang
<i>outgrow</i> s. <i>th.</i> über etwas hinauswachsen	<i>sheer</i> einfach	
<i>outpouring</i> Ausbruch	<i>shower</i> überschütten	<i>weird</i> überirdisch
<i>overstrain</i> Überanstrennung	<i>shrill</i> kreischend	<i>wield</i> handhaben, führen
	<i>sneer</i> höhnisch lachen	<i>wig</i> Perücke
<i>pant out</i> ausstoßen		<i>worst</i> überwältigen
		<i>woo</i> umwerben, freien
		<i>wrest from</i> entreißen
		<i>yarn</i> lange Geschichte
		<i>yearning</i> sehnsüchtig

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## MISPRINTS

Page 4. Beowulf's Last Words, l. 24, *read: appointed, not appointed.*  
Page 52, l. 7: *extravagance, not extravagance.*  
Page 74, l. 20, 21 *read: and literature was the richer because Coleridge had lived.*

Page 107, l. 24/25 *read: a terrible old tyrant.*  
Page 107, l. 25/26 *read: and his second son.*  
Contents p. 127 *not 128* (after The End of the Victorian Age).

UNIVERSITY OF ART, CULTURE AND LANGUAGES



ART CULTURE AND LANGUAGE

